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KINGSTON
ATHENÆUM.

MRS. ARMYTAGE;

OR,

FEMALE DOMINATION.

BY THE

AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS."

SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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FEMALE DOMINATION.

CHAPTER I.

"A boy?—God bless your Highness! 'Tis a *girl*,
Promising boys hereafter!"

HENRY VIII.

WHEN Arthur Armytage, haggard with the fatigue and anxiety of his journey, rushed into the drawing-room at Holywell, prepared to hear the worst, which the solemn deportment of old Simmons on the hall steps had already partly communicated,—he was at a loss to interpret the expression of his mother's countenance. It was not that of affliction,—no!—Marian must be still alive;—it was that of intense vexation. But Sophia, seeing her brother incapable of uttering a syllable of in-

quiry, explained all in a few kind words.—His wife was safe, and he was the father of a little girl.

In another minute he was in Marian's darkened chamber, awaiting the precautions necessary for the announcement of his arrival; and touched as he already was, the tears fell from his eyes as, concealed behind her curtain, he listened to the faint accents in which she murmured, "Another disappointment!—I fancied I heard a carriage!—Will he never come?—Shall I never—never see him again?"

But this one painful moment was followed by hours of unqualified happiness. With one hand locked in her husband's, while contemplating the beauty of the sleeping babe, which bore so remarkable a resemblance to Arthur, it certainly never occurred to Marian that the birth of so fair and promising a creature could be a source of annoyance to any human being. Yet the steward's-room at Holywell, participating in the vexation of its lady, had almost

refused to drink a health to the newly-born; and at what quarter of the universe Miss Armytage the Second was wished, by the whole population of the village, it might not be discreet to conjecture.

The disappointment of the poorer tenants was, however, of brief duration. Mrs. Armytage's attention was roused to the possibility that her mortification might become evident to the neighbourhood, by a visit of congratulation from the inevitable proprietor of Mill-Hill; who mingled with his felicitations the expression of an earnest hope that the next child born at Holywell might be a boy. She accordingly gave orders that, although no bells were to be rung, nor beacon, nor bonfire to be kindled, all the expected gratuities should be bestowed, and all the preparations for festivity continued. The ox need not be roasted whole; but it might still be apportioned to the poor. After all, the little find their account in the ostentations of the great.

But although she prepared herself to receive with the blandest courtesy the congratulations of the neighbourhood and the good wishes of her dependents on the occasion, Mrs. Armytage had very little patience with Marian's exultation in finding herself the mother of a daughter. "She had always so wished for a girl;—girls are such comforts, such companions to their mothers;—boys such plagues, such disappointments!—Her own mother had gone through such anxieties with her seven unruly noisy boys! Her own mother had often told her there was more gratification to be hoped from the possession of one daughter, than from a dozen sons."

"Her *own* mother!"—As if the opinions of a Mrs. Baltimore of Baker-street were to be quoted in a case of heirship to Holywell Park; the ancient estate of Holywell,—the inheritance of the family of Maudsley, from the days of Domesday-book!

But Marian was above propitiating her

awful mother-in-law, either by artifice or hypocrisy. She knew that Mrs. Armytage was vexed,—old Mrs. Macklin had admitted the fact. But she *did* rejoice in her daughter, and would not conceal it. She could not even concur in Arthur's opinion, that his mother should be conciliated by an invitation to become sponsor to the child. For she had always promised "mamma and aunts" that they should be godmothers to her first little girl. Mrs. Armytage smiled contemptuously on learning that her grand-daughter—HER grand-daughter,—was to be named Harriet, after Mrs. Baltimore;—but Marian might have christened it Jacobina, after its godfather, Mr. Dyke Robsey, and she would have disdained to interfere.

Mrs. Arthur appeared, indeed, to have already regained her unhappy skill in the art of giving offence. Mrs. Armytage happened to be present when she expressed to her husband a desire that she might get well as fast

as possible, in order to pass the promised fortnight at Spalding Court; and to overhear her entreaties that she might not be obliged to accept a similar invitation to Greta Castle. "She was quite sure the Rotherhams would bore her to death. Lady Arabella Quin had always assured her that Lady Rotherham was the greatest quiz on earth." And then she freely admitted, that she considered the Wermersleys the pleasantest people in the neighbourhood;—was all eagerness that Arthur should fix the day for his Election Ball, at the Blue Boar; and playfully reproached him with indifference towards so interesting an event. Little did she suspect how disagreeably Arthur's thoughts were pre-occupied. Next to being in love—nothing renders a man so absent, and so unsatisfactory a companion, as being in debt; and Armytage was entangled in difficulties which, although of no very serious nature, proved most annoying to a young man of spirit and honour, unaccustomed to the

degradation of pecuniary embarrassment. On quitting Paris, he had been under the necessity of giving bills to the amount of many hundred pounds; and the extreme liberality with which Mrs. Armytage had come forward in the business of his Election, and the considerable sum she had undertaken to add to his income, in order to enable him to meet the expenses of a residence in town, rendered it almost impossible for him to apply to her for assistance. He trusted that, in the course of a year, he might economize the necessary sum. But his own fortune was now tied up by settlements; and, in the interim, what were to be his resources?

Business with his lawyer, connected with these embarrassments, had been the true cause of delaying his return to Holywell; business which his sudden summons into the country had left unsettled; nor could he, at present, quit Marian, for the renewal of his negociations; so that Arthur's brow was

often clouded by disturbance of mind, which it was above all things his object to conceal from the observation of his mother and sister. His sadness was not, however, lost on Marian; but it was attributed only to regret for the pleasures and associations of London; and in this persuasion, every shade upon her husband's countenance became reflected with deeper gloom upon her own. While her tears fell silently upon her slumbering child, she thought it doubly hard that the sorrows of life should be thus introduced to render her pillow sleepless, at a period consecrated, in most instances, by the utmost vigilance of conjugal tenderness.

Pre-engrossed by his own vexations, her husband detected not the gradual depression of her spirits; or, naturally, attributed the alteration of her manners to the feebleness of her frame. Yet he considered her sufficiently convalescent to entitle him to ride over to Spalding Court, to consult his friend Lord Wyndham, who was just arrived from the con-

tinent, concerning his pecuniary dilemma; for when people get into mischief, it is always to those on mischief intent that they turn for counsel. Arthur decided that Winsome Wyn, constantly involved in scrapes of a similar nature, could not but be an admirable adviser. For any other purpose, his friend Greta, or his friend Greta's father, would have been readily preferred; but he dared not, on this occasion, refer himself to Lord Rotherham, who, he was persuaded, would not fail to force his personal assistance upon the son of his old friend. Lord Wyndham's purse, no doubt, was equally at his service; but the purse of a younger son and a gambler would probably convey no alarming weight of obligation.

"I wish you were not going to Spalding Court, just now," observed Sophy, on learning from her brother that the distance of the visit would render it necessary for him to sleep there, in the event of his friend Wyn being already arrived; or at Greta Castle, a few

miles off, in order to avoid a formal day with the Duke and Duchess.

"And why not?—Marian is almost recovered."

"True—but any uneasiness on your account might throw her back."

"Uneasiness! What uneasiness can possibly result from a man's riding across the country to dine and sleep with a friend?"

"No reasonable anxiety, I admit," said Sophy, blushing with the apprehension of betraying the secret she had half discovered, half divined, of the jealous griefs of her sister-in-law. "And then my mother is so much annoyed by the idea of your going uninvited to the Duke of Spalding's."

"My dear little Soph, had you only heard the Duchess's general invitations to me in London, you would have fancied me a bachelor duke, with the rent-roll of a German sovereign; and admitted that even the susceptibility of a Mrs. Armytage need suffer no alarm."

"But you have not paid a single visit since your return to our oldest friends and neighbours—the Maranhams, for instance."

"Our oldest neighbours, indeed!" interrupted Arthur. "Ask yourself whether it would be natural for me to prefer the society of those weird women to that of my young friends the Spaldings."

"And then you have decided to go on Tuesday," said Sophy, abandoning point after point to the brother so long accustomed to exercise unlimited influence over her thoughts and actions,—"and on Wednesday the tenants are to have their feast."

"And cannot they eat their beef and pudding, in my daughter's honour, without my being present to wish them a good appetite?"

"My mother fancied you would make it a point to appear among them on such an occasion."

"Had I even proposed it, she would never

have forgiven me. You know how she hates my interference."

"It would be a pity, however, that you should thwart her on so trifling a temptation," persisted Miss Armytage; the recollection of Marian's pale face and of her mother's angry one prompting her to persevere.

But Arthur, whose humour was just then strongly tinctured with the irritation arising from a London attorney's letter on the subject of his bills, was no less obstinate than his sister.

"I am tired out by the constant apprehension of thwarting my mother's whims and fancies," said he. "At my age it is time to leave off leading-strings. The subjection in which I have been held from the hour of my birth has proved the bane of my life—has prevented me from taking my place in society as I ought—has prevented me from marrying as I ought——"

Sophia, fancying that this last remark bore reference to Lady Laura Greta, felt the colour rise in her cheeks.

"Well, well, let us say no more about it," she cried, dreading what might follow.

"I beg your pardon, let us say all that *is* to be said, now we are on so ungracious a subject. I wish to prepare you, Sophy, for seeing me throw off this miserable state of subservience—for seeing me vindicate my rights and act like a man. Henceforth I shall go where I please, live with whom I please; and should my mother persist in opposing my wishes at every turn, and reducing me to the condition of an automaton,—good bye Holywell! I swear to Heaven I will retire to some hovel in Wales, and never see her face again!"

"You are angry now, and I will not dispute the point with you," said the mild Sophia, aware that Arthur's wrath was never of very long continuance. "I know you do too much

justice to my mother's excellence ever to be betrayed into treating her with disrespect. Meanwhile, do not talk quite so loud; for you have a little wife whose nerves are not very strong just now; and who, if I mistake not, has already learned to tremble at the sound of an angry voice."

CHAPTER II.

"I strongly wish for what I faintly hope;—
Like the day dreams of melancholy men,
I love to wander in that golden maze."

DRYDEN.

TUESDAY came,—and Arthur went;—went, in spite of his mother's sullen, and his wife's sorrowful countenance.

"I shall be at home to-morrow in time to preside over the tenants' feast," said he to Mrs. Armytage, as he bid them all farewell. "Instead, therefore, of sleeping at the Duke's, as I intended, I shall get as far back on my way home to-night as Greta Castle. I find that the Rotherhams came down from town yesterday."

"*But* yesterday,—and he makes his way

there to-day," sighed Marian to herself, as he quitted the room; and rising to retire to her own.

"*Preside* over the tenants' feast!" reiterated Mrs. Armytage aloud. "I beg it to be understood, that so long as *I* am at Holywell, I require no assistance in the presidency of my household arrangements."

"It is *I*, mother, who am in fault,"—observed Sophia, ever ready to shelter others at her own expense. "I ventured to tell Arthur that I thought his presence would be expected here to-morrow; which induced him to return and sleep to-night at Greta Castle."

"It is to be regretted you were not equally officious two years ago," cried Mrs. Armytage, whose temper was roused to the utmost by the sound of the departing hoofs of Arthur's horse, and her detestation of the Duchess of Spalding; "when all the county was busy with his attachment to your friend Lady

Laura. Had you persuaded him to visit Greta Castle *then*,—you would have conferred a real benefit on him and his family!"

Sophia turned away in trepidation, just in time to discern Marian's white dress retreating along the conservatory. She flattered herself her sister-in-law had been too deeply ensconced among the myrtles and heliotropes to overhear the last bitter apostrophe; and, when they met again in the afternoon, exercised an anxious scrutiny over Marian's countenance, to ascertain whether she had been weeping. But Marian was engaged in caressing her little girl,—and "made no sign." Mrs. Armytage, too, was engaged;—engaged in directing the morrow's entertainments; and Sophy accordingly profited by the leisure afforded her to ponder in a solitary ramble over some intelligence recently imparted to her by her brother;—intelligence dearly concerning her happiness; but which the events in the Holy-

well family during the past month had forbidden her to consider too deeply.

Precisely at the disastrous moment which summoned Arthur into Yorkshire, a rumour had accidentally reached him at his club, that his friend Rainsford, at that time unaccountably absent from town, had been sent for to the dying bed of a distant relative, reputed to be immensely rich, and supposed to entertain intentions of adopting Edgar as his heir. Nothing further had transpired. Every one's good wishes were with "one of the best fellows in the world." But he was still absent; —no announcement of old Rainsford's death had appeared in the newspapers; and Arthur Armytage, aware that no actual engagement subsisted between his sister and his friend, felt the impossibility of addressing to him from Holywell those friendly inquiries respecting his change of circumstances which, in a less delicate position, would have flowed natu-

rally from his pen. No sooner, indeed, had he communicated the report to Sophia, than she earnestly interdicted all communication on the subject.

Her hopes were not the less sanguine for being thus modestly subdued. She was aware that a brother of Edgar's father had held a high appointment in India, and that between him and his nephew no communication had ever existed. Old Rainsford was a miser and a humourist; and although as likely to bequeath his property to the foundation of an hospital for decayed Lascars, as to any member of his family, might perhaps have been moved, by his nephew's high reputation and rising prospects, to adopt him as a son. After all, then, he might be placed in a situation to claim her hand—to surmount her mother's objections—to insure the happiness of her future life! The next month, the next week, the next day, might bring confirmation of these tantalizing rumours, and reward her

patient—her more than authorized fidelity! For a moment, Sophia almost wished she had accepted Lady Rotherham's invitation to London, that she might have been on the spot to catch the first tidings of Edgar's prosperity. She fancied that her interest in the subject would have enabled her instantly to ascertain the truth. But another minute's reflection reminded her that her sojourn in the Greta family might have also tended to strengthen that attachment on the part of her friend Laura's brother, her rejection of which, she feared, might one day produce an estrangement between the families; and again, on considering how many were the moments when her presence at Holywell had afforded support and comfort to her weak, but amiable sister-in-law, she admitted that everything had happened for the best. Yes—*everything!* For now that Arthur and his family were settled at Holywell, her mother could more readily spare her to preside over the household happi-

ness of another; and "Mrs. Edgar Rainsford's" place would be filled by Mrs. Arthur Armytage!

Meanwhile, poor Sophy's waking visions, brilliant as they were, scarcely shone so bright as the sun that beamed the following morning upon Holywell;—the glorious and unclouded sun of an English July, when the harvest is ripening in the fields, and the fruit in the orchards —when Nature seems to pour forth her abundance in unchecked prodigality—when even the poor who labour are content, and the beasts who perish, satisfied—when, their wickets and their lattices ajar, the humblest cottages become purified by the breath of summer—while the sick and the aged sit in the sunshine, and are cheered—when the joyous children roll upon the green sward, and the very cur with which they are frolicking appears to be in better humour with its shaggy coat.

Such was the aspect of the country when

Arthur, released from the hospitality of Spalding Court (but not till he had passed the night under its gorgeous roof), turned his horse's head towards Holywell; nor could he help contrasting, as he passed the precincts of the Spalding estate, and at the distance of ten miles entered those of his mother, the difference perceptible in the lands of the operative, and those of the aristocratic proprietor. The Duke—frustrated in all his plans by the Duchess, who, the moment she found her frustration complete, resigned her monopoly into the hands of an unenlightened and interested steward — was a well-meaning, ill-judging landlord. His farms were in bad condition; his woods ruined by improvidence; his lands ill-drained — everything misconducted. But at Holywell, all was order, industry, and prosperity—the results of a well-administered expenditure. There were no fancy cottages—no picturesque villages—no Doric rectories. But the ancient hamlets were

substantially kept up—the farms surrounded by solid offices—the schoolhouses and the almshouses for the young and infirm, spacious and cheerful. The parsonages looked snug and respectable—the churchyards, neat—the whole population, thriving.

Arthur's best feelings were gratified. "My mother's temper may be irritable," meditated he, as he made such speed along the green lanes as the fervour of the weather would permit; "but her principles are sound, and her feelings in the right place. She has been wiser in her generation than her son will prove hereafter. I should never have had the patience or the forethought to effect all this. Her whole life has been devoted to Holywell, and it does her credit: there is not so well-regulated an estate in the county. I can forgive her for being proud: it *is* something to be Mrs. Armytage of Holywell."

This last exclamation was almost involuntarily uttered as he attained the high grounds

forming the northern boundary of the park, and caught sight, in one glorious landscape, of its many-tinted woods—of the broad river sweeping along the valley below, with the ruins of the ancient monastery of the Holie Well, standing lonely in the midst of a grassy glade —the noble mansion-house gleaming out at intervals from its sheltering oaks and chestnuts—the majestic bridge—the distant temple —the rising shrubberies—all united and filled up into a sylvan picture by the widely-spreading verdure of the park.

A nobly-wooded valley still intervened between him and the lodge connecting the village of Holywell with the park, on emerging from which, he found himself suddenly in the midst of the tents erected for the promised convivialities of the day. To his surprise and regret, the tenants were already assembled; and as there was no hope of passing unobserved through the lodge, so as to enjoy a momentary interview with his wife previously to

entering upon his duties of hospitality, Arthur dismounted with a good grace, accepted, with a cordial smile, the congratulations poured upon him on all sides, and, making his way towards a tent where a group of farmers were eagerly discussing the markets and the politics of Thoroton, he was soon surrounded by the same affectionate deference which had been formerly conceded to his ill-fated father. The tenants took pride in their young squire, more especially since he had been a soldier and a parliament man.

It was at this unlucky moment, when all men's eyes were bent on Arthur, and all tongues cried "God save him!"—while many a venerable white head was uncovered in his honour, which had paid the same tribute of respect to three generations of the family, that Mrs. Armytage, satisfied in her own mind that her son was at thirty miles' distance, and that he had gone out of the way expressly to avoid

the tumults of the celebration, descended from her pony chair within the lodge gate, where her chief domestics were in waiting to escort her; and, leaning on Sophia's arm, advanced majestically along the short double avenue of elms connecting the village with the park.

To her amazement there was not a soul to welcome her! Old Hardywood was by her side, and Simmons and the rest were following; but between the gay, noisy throng, visible in the sunshine beyond the deep shadow of the overspreading elms, and the spot where her arrival was expected, not so much as a straggling child to drop a frightened curtsey to Madam Armytage!

"Their sports have already begun," said Sophia, interpreting her mother's look of surprise.

"Before my honoured mistress's arrival?" grumbled Old Simmons. "No, no — they know better."

But, on attaining the verge of the avenue, the truth became apparent. *There* stood Arthur—like the image which Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up, with the whole multitude bowed down before him! He was talking to this man, shaking hands with that, and laughing and chatting with all.

Mrs. Armytage's colour went and came, for she found herself standing almost unheeded amid the throng.

"Had I suspected that you were bent upon courting clandestine popularity, free from my observation," said she, addressing her son in a suppressed voice, "your sister and myself would have been spared a hot and dusty drive."

Arthur was too much startled to reply; and his mother persevered in the same bitter and taunting strain. But he felt his spirit rebelling within him; and lest he should be tempted to utter some unworthy rejoinder, bowed cour-

teously around, made his way through the crowd, took his horse from the groom, and, mounting in a second, scarcely drew breath till he found himself beneath the portico of Holywell.

CHAPTER III.

I'd rather in the centre of the earth
Be closed deep, to dig my upward way
To the far-distant light, than stay me thus,
And, looking round upon my bounded state,
Say—This is all!

JOANNA BAILLIE.

"WHAT letters, love, were you reading when I came into the room?" inquired Arthur, listlessly, of his wife, after having affectionately embraced and condoled with her on the increased languor of her looks.

"Nothing very interesting—only some old papers," replied Marian, the paleness of her cheek giving place to a rising blush, as she attempted to thrust them still farther under the pillow of the sofa.

"They looked like letters."

"No!—only bills—papers. How long have you been in riding over from Spalding Court?

and what did you settle with the Duchess about our visit?"

"Nothing: as soon as you are strong enough to leave home I am to write and let her know," replied Arthur, still, with a marital instinct, keeping his eye on the pillow of the sofa.

"But if you came away so early," resumed Marian, although her husband had not alluded to the hour of his departure, "I am afraid you had no breakfast. Did you stop at Lord Rotherham's?"

"No!—I cut straight across the country, to save time; but Wyndham Spalding's Italian fellow brought me a cup of coffee and a roll in my own room before I set off. Of course I did not choose to disturb the family by my unreasonable hours." And still he kept his eye on the cushion.

"I fancy the Spaldings keep up all their London hours and habits in the country?" resumed Marian. "The Duchess struck me, the morning she was here, as the most completely

Londonized—fashionized person I ever beheld."

"Yes—odious—that is—charming;—very agreeable house—very amusing people," replied Arthur, in an absent, pre-occupied manner, and vexed with himself for not daring to ask his wife in a straight-forward way to show him the papers. But nothing is so difficult as to be straight-forward, where the person you love, and desire to love, seems inclined to equivocate.

The next minute, the nurse, previously summoned, brought in the baby; and Mrs. Arthur, in the delight of exhibiting the wonders of improvement which a lapse of twenty-four hours had wrought in her darling, forgot her secret hoard. While she rose from the sofa, to gratify the infant with the brighter light of the window, Arthur quietly drew forth a handful of yellow, soiled manuscripts, written in an old-fashioned Italian hand, which he seemed vaguely to recognize. There were figures and

dates mingled with the writing; the papers were probably, what Marian had asserted, old, very old bills.

"What did you find in this rubbish to interest you; and why did you put aside the papers when I came in?" he now inquired; when Marian, turning round, saw the roll in his hand; his natural ingenuousness returning, the moment his jealous suspicions were relieved.

"Because I thought you might be angry with me for reading them, instead of giving them at once to your mother," replied Marian, with equal frankness. "Mrs. Macklin found them in a recess of the old ebony press, of which she begged the use for the nursery. They seem to be of no consequence; — we may as well burn them;—they would not have been left in the press, had they been worth preserving."

"True—I will burn them in my own room," said Arthur; "it is so hot a day that the blaze might incommode you."

"Give them to Macklin to burn; there is a fire in the nursery."

"Never give papers to servants to burn," said Arthur, carelessly. "At best, they lose their time (which is yours) trying to gratify their curiosity by decyphering what cannot be of the slightest importance to them; at worst, they set fire to the chimney."

And he put the papers into his pocket. A word or two had met his eye which excited his curiosity; and striking must the word have been which arrested his attention at such a moment; for, on entering Marian's room, the utmost effervescence of human petulance was fretting in his bosom. But there was something in the feminine youthfulness of her appearance and manner, especially just then, enhanced by the first expansion of motherly feeling, peculiarly calculated to turn away wrath. She was mild, pale, low-voiced—very different from the affected Parisian Belle, whose nervous tone of over-excitement had so roused

the prejudices of Mrs. Armytage. However much the daughter of Jack Baltimore and the niece of Mrs. Dyke Robsey, there was nothing vulgar or offensive in Marian—she wanted only tact to become a charming woman—how small a deficiency in a wife!

"I have had letters from home this morning," said she, having apparently already forgotten Arthur's appropriation of Mrs. Macklin's discoveries.

"Your family are well?"—

"Quite well; but evidently hurt that they saw so little of you while you were in town. I must write and explain to them how completely you were engrossed by your parliamentary duties."

(Parliamentary duties!—alas! how vast a screen has that pretext afforded to the faults and follies of husband-kind!)

"They are all dying to see little Harriet!" continued Marian; "and Mamma says that if Bob and Jem had not been sent home from

Parson's Green with the measles, she would have got into the mail as soon as she heard of my safety, and come down to have a peep at us."

Arthur offered secret thanks to the Hygeia presiding over the preparatory schools of the metropolis, for having preserved him from so great an evil!—while his wife continued:—"But it was all for the best; for my Uncle and Aunt Robsey, who are tired of Cheltenham and Ramsgate, intend coming to the North this autumn, and making the tour of Buxton, Matlock, and Harrogate."

"They had better confine themselves to Derbyshire," interrupted Arthur—"Derbyshire is the most picturesque county in England—I am sure they would delight in Derbyshire."

"But I do not think my aunt cares very much for scenery—she likes stir and bustle; and has heard that the Derbyshire bathing-places are dull."

"Quite a mistake, I assure you!—Buxton is extremely gay. All the people from Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, frequent Buxton: there are plenty of balls—the place will just suit her."

"I hope not," said Marian, innocently; "for she has promised to come on as far as Scarborough, and take a house large enough to hold us all—one of the best in the place—and we are to go over and spend a month with her. I am sure the sea-air will be of great service to baby."

"My dear love, the baby requires no service. I never saw a more healthy child."

"So Mrs. Macklin says—the finest she ever nursed—much the finest! Still I think I should like to go to Scarborough."

"You forget your visit to the Spaldings," said Arthur.

"Oh! no—I would not, on any account, give up my visit to the Spaldings. But it need not interfere with the Scarborough plan;

for my aunt and uncle have determined to time their tour, so as to be here for Doncaster races. Papa, you know, comes down every year to the races, and this time they will all come together—only think, how delightful!"

And Arthur did think!—and with a face rueful as the professional countenance of the expounder of sepulchral emblems in Westminster Abbey! The idea of presenting his pretty little wife to his mother's friends and the aristocratic world of Yorkshire, surrounded by Robseys,—Jack Baltimores,—and Tom Warleys!—Rather emigrate at once to the Illinois, or Swan River!

"And what have you said in reply to all these schemes?" he inquired in a hesitating voice.

"That I could decide on nothing till I had consulted you."

"And *I* on nothing, till I have learned what are my moth——" he was going to add, "my mother's plans for the autumn;" but at

that moment, his heart revolted against the servility of the phrase.

"Do you not think that, as the day is so fine, I might take a drive this morning?" inquired Marian, who was still loitering near the windows with her child in her arms.

"Certainly,—a drive would strengthen you and do you good."

"I do so want to have a peep at the tenants' feast! Célestine says it is a *triste affaire;* — nothing but beef and beer; no swings, no merry-go-rounds, no *pain d'épice* as they have at the *fêtes* in France. Still I should really like to see the people enjoying themselves."

"Why did you not accompany my mother, if you wished for a drive?" inquired Arthur with a misgiving heart.

"I did not think of it," replied his wife; but the colour rose self-accusingly on her pale cheek.

"You did not choose it, you mean;" said

Arthur, smiling and shaking his head with a reproving gesture.

"No! indeed,—I should have liked it beyond any thing!" cried Marian. "But, *entre nous*, Sophia hinted to me that Mrs. Armytage did not wish it."

"Not wish for your company?—a very officious suggestion of Sophia's. Why should she suppose any such thing?"

"Ah! do not call any action of your sister's officious!" exclaimed Marian, gently replacing her sleeping child in its *berçonnette;* and taking a place on the sofa close beside her husband. "I assure you it was with a most mournful face, and with tears in her eyes, that Sophy whispered to me her advice not to propose sending down the child into the village, or joining the party, unless you arrived in time to give me your arm."

"How strange, how unaccountable!" mused Arthur.

"Not strange or unaccountable on the part

of Sophia," resumed his wife. "Sophia would do, and has done, every thing in her power to spare me a moment's mortification. If you did but know how kind, how *very* kind she was during your absence in London, when I was out of spirits, and, perhaps, a little out of temper — sitting with me hour after hour, talking or silent as pleased me best; reading to me, singing to me; just as my fancies were inclined."

"Dear, good girl!" ejaculated Arthur, pleased with his sister, and scarcely less with the cordial testimony of his wife.

"And then she took such pains, in her mild, quiet way, to prevent my saying and doing things that—that"——she hesitated.

"Well?"

"That might prejudice your mother against me. You know how very apt Mrs. Armytage is to take exception about trifles; and you know how very disagreeable she can make herself when she is displeased."

"Indeed I *do!*" cried Arthur, with some energy; roused for the first time to consciousness of all his wife might have had to encounter from the arbitrary temper of Mrs. Armytage. "But surely, situated as you were, she could not have ventured to treat you with harshness?"

"I have always lived with such warm-hearted, kind people," replied Marian, "that I scarcely know what the word harshness means. But her coldness and uncommunicativeness seemed like harshness to *me*. I wanted somebody to cheer me and talk to me like a mother, being away from my own friends. But when I was ill and unhappy, she used still to call me "Madam," and "Mrs. Arthur Armytage;" so that I did not dare even comfort myself by crying in her presence."

"That *was* hard!" said Arthur, trying to smile, as he affectionately kissed his wife,—

not liking her to see how much he was touched by her ingenuous simplicity.

"Indeed I felt it so, at the time. But, thank goodness, it is all over now. Only I am afraid that I shall never cease to feel, what I have felt from the first, a stranger in this house. Beautiful as Holywell is, and much beyond any place where I have ever lived, you cannot think how desolate it makes me feel. I would much rather reside with you in any farm-house on the estate."

"Whims and fancies!" cried Arthur, again striving to smile. "You are vexed just now at Sophia's hint about the fête. I dare say it was only a mistake."

"*No* mistake!—I know I am very stupid, and know nothing of the world. Lady Arabella, you remember, used always to be laughing at what she called my want of tact. Still I have observation enough to be aware that Mrs. Armytage is dreadfully mortified at

your marriage with an insignificant person like myself; when she wanted you to choose Lady Laura Greta."

"Lady Laura Greta?"—interrupted Arthur, inconsiderately. "Why, it was my mother, and my mother alone, who prevented the match! We should have married years ago, if my mother had not all but forbidden me to enter Lord Rotherham's house! I went into the army chiefly to get out of the way of being bullied about Greta Castle. No—no! my dear Marian," he continued, quite unconscious of the pain he had inflicted,—"set your heart at ease on that score! Nothing would have annoyed Mrs. Armytage half so much as to see me married to a woman of a rank superior to her own."

Marian now drew so deep a sigh, that her husband turned towards her, and was struck by the variability of her complexion.

"I really believe you do want air!" said he, goodnaturedly. "After Sophia's hint, how-

ever, do not let us think of the feast or the village. If Mrs. Macklin will give you leave, put on your bonnet, and we will try a stroll in the shrubberies."

CHAPTER IV.

A wife!—a silly, harmless, household dove,
Fond without art, and kind without deceit.

DRYDEN.

MARIAN was not only "as well as could be expected," but happier than could have been expected, when, leaning on her husband's arm, she stole down the great pompous galleried staircase of Holywell,—through the conservatory, and into the bright and beautiful flower-garden. Four weeks' seclusion tended wonderfully to enhance the delights of sunshine, fresh air, and liberty. When last she wandered through that garden, it had been mourning over Arthur's absence, pining for the sound of his voice,—and now—now—he was by her side, and she was the mother of his child!

"After all, this *is* a perfect Eden!" faltered the young wife.

"Too truly said!" replied Arthur, laughing, "for here comes the evil one to verify the comparison!"

And at that moment, a turn of the shrubbery brought them in view of Mr. Wemmersley, followed by a shabby-genteel man, apparently much in awe of his own Sunday coat.

"How very tiresome!—how impossible it seems to have a moment's perfect enjoyment!" cried Marian, almost out of humour at such an interruption at such a moment.

"Enchanted to see you out again, my dear Madam Armytage! how are you?" said Wemmersley, meeting them, and evidently as much disconcerted as themselves; while the shabby-genteel individual stood uncovered and abashed. "I am afraid I am here as an intruder. But, concluding all the family were down yonder at the Cross, I took the liberty of

bringing my head-gardener" — (he had but one)—"to look at the new flues of the Holywell pinery."

"You are sadly out of your road then," replied Arthur, coolly;—"you have passed the turning leading to the gardens by half a mile."

"I thought it would be a good opportunity to avoid being in any one's way," continued Wemmersley, disregarding him, and fancying he had completely disguised his real purpose of spying out all the Holywell improvements, and learning from his gardener of what plants it was best worth while to ask for cuttings and suckers.

"I thought I heard my mother offer you the plan of the new flues?" observed Arthur, perceiving that Wemmersley, having dismissed his follower to the kitchen-garden, was preparing to bear them company.

"Did she?—I scarcely remember."

"But you said you thought the system very inferior to that pursued at Mill-hill."

"Did I?—I must have been an ass!—The Duchess of Spalding frankly told me, she considered the pine she tasted at luncheon at Holywell very superior to ours."

"She must have said it to annoy you," observed Marian, quietly; "for the Spaldings arrived here soon after breakfast, and no luncheon was even proposed."

"Then it must have been Lady Rotherham."

"Lady Rotherham has not tasted fruit these thirty years. She would as soon swallow a dose of nux vomica as a slice of pine," retorted Arthur.

"Well—no matter who it was. Some one, desirous to put me out of conceit with my gardener, or my stock, or my pinery, assured me those of Mr. Armytage were the best in the county; and as it is never too late to mend,

here I am to take my lesson. But why are you not presiding over your plum-puddings and rounds of beef, my dear Armytage? My bailiff tells me your preparations have raised the price of coals in the neighbourhood."

"Lucky, then, that we happen to be in the dog days," said Arthur, drily.

"I suppose you have sent your little son—I beg your pardon—I mean your little girl, to do the honours in your place?"

"No; my little girl is safe at home in her nursery. I did not suppose the din of tabors and fifes was likely to be more agreeable to *her*, poor child, than I found it myself."

"Oh! you *have* been there, then. Well—I have lost my wager!"

"Your wager?"

"I staked a sovereign with Gumption last night that you would not *show*."

"I am glad you thought my proceedings worthy the hazard of your money. But why you should imagine me disinclined to show

myself to my mother's tenants, I cannot imagine."

"Simply because they *are* your mother's tenants; and we all know that Mrs. Armytage rules, and chooses to rule, supreme at Holywell. Prince Harry must not assume the crown before his time! And pray, when are we to have our election ball at Thoroton? My wife's new dress has been waiting these two months."

"As soon as *my* wife feels well enough to preside over so noisy an assembly," said Arthur.

"Your *wife?*—oh! ay—very true; wife to the member—it *must* be *Mrs. Arthur.* Ay—ay! That accounts for the delay. But you had better have got through the ceremony during Mrs. Arthur Armytage's illness, and that would have obviated all difficulties."

"What difficulties?—what do you mean?"

"Only that, as Mrs. Armytage came forward so liberally on the election, and sacrificed

her nephew, and her objections, we concluded you would pay her the compliment of making her lady-paramount at your ball, which, as we all know, is a post she is never averse to occupy.

"I feel so much fatigued that I must beg Mr. Wemmersley to excuse us, and allow me to return to the house," interrupted Marian, perceiving from certain involuntary twitches of her husband's arm that he was becoming greatly irritated. And Wemmersley had accordingly no alternative but to raise his hat, and beg he might be no restraint upon their movements.

"And in this miserable light does her arbitrary temper expose me to be regarded by all the country!" cried Arthur, as they returned to the house; too much excited by Wemmersley's taunts to be aware that he was thinking aloud. "At *my* age, a man—a representative of the interests of thousands—a husband—a

father—to be kept in such vile subservience! it is too much."

And Marian was again and again obliged to complain of fatigue, of uneasiness, of indisposition, in hopes to distract his attention, and induce him to moderate his voice. Arrived in the hall, he insisted on carrying her up stairs; and having carefully laid her on the sofa in her own room, proposed leaving her in quiet as a pretext for retiring to his—for the pleasure of "nursing his wrath to keep it warm."

But the Venetian blinds of his dressing-room were down, and its atmosphere refreshing. The great arm-chair, too, looked inviting after his feverish morning's ride; and Arthur's first movement was to exchange his coat for a cool dressing-gown, in order to enjoy the *dolce-far-niente* till dinner-time. But, as he threw it aside, a rustling in the pocket reminded him of the papers from which his recent ebullition of temper had withdrawn his

attention; and, having secured the door, and turned the blinds so as to admit sufficient daylight for his purpose, he was soon deep in the perusal of the old mildewed pages.

The two first that fell into his hands were disappointing enough, and almost determined him to throw aside the rest—mere draughts of leases, written in the cramped hieroglyphics of an attorney's clerk. The third was a recipe in a formal Italian hand, which he instantly recognized to be that of his grandfather Maudsley, for curing the distemper, and fumigating a kennel. He was sure it was his grandfather's; the writing, of a very peculiar character, being similar to that in which certain prayers and supplications were inscribed in the first leaf of every prayer-book in the family pew,—an ancient collection of rituals, some of which invoked the blessings of Providence "on Her most Gracious Majesty Queen Anne." Arthur no longer doubted that the papers had been Mr. Maudsley's, left acciden-

tally undiscovered in the old escrutoire, and of no further consequence.

He was about to lay aside the remainder, when the page which had first attracted his notice as containing the names of his father and mother, again claimed his attention; and as he read on and on, his eyes became riveted to the paper. Yet he was almost inclined to distrust their evidence:—to doubt whether he were alive and in his right senses!—His breath grew short, even to gasping; the dew rose upon his forehead;—and he laid down the roll.

"This is too absurd!" cried he aloud; recovering himself after the lapse of a minute. "To be thus moved by a thing that will turn out of no sort of importance!"

But a second glance convinced him that the codicil to old Maudsley's will, which he had been perusing, although styled a copy, was formally signed with his name, and witnessed by three witnesses. The names of two were

strange to him; the third was that of old Hardywood.

And what intention, after all, did that codicil record?—What was the deed which had so moved the feelings of Arthur Armytage? Neither more nor less than an instrument conveying to himself, at the age of twenty-one, the entire possession and enjoyment of the Holywell estate. The codicil, executed shortly after the marriage of his parents, conferred on their eldest son the privileges of sole heirship, in the event of his daughter's husband dying during the minority of the boy. It was evident that the excellent qualities of the elder Arthur had wrought a change in the old man's views. He seemed to have felt that the future representation of the family needed not to be indispensably vested in the person of a female.

Arthur, then, Arthur solely and wholly, was now master of Holywell! As the fact became clearly manifest to his mind, his first move-

ment was to rise from his chair with a burst of exultation;—his next was to reseat himself with a poignant pang of self-reproach.

His mother!—What was to become of his mother; who had been all in all to Holywell, and to whom Holywell was all in all;—whose name, whose very nature, seemed to be that of "Mrs. Armytage, of Holywell Park!" Such a reverse would certainly prove the death of his mother; his upright conscientious mother, who, faithful to her early widowhood, had refused more than one noble suitor for the sake of her children; his mother,—who had done her duty in her generation,—whose career of life was three parts ended,—whose latter days must be—but no!—the thing was not to be hazarded! The existence of the codicil was unknown to all but him. He would destroy it at once, and forego the temptation!

Already the paper crackled in his hand; and, had there been a fire in the room, it is probable that his generous purpose would

have been instantly fulfilled. But that momentary pause brought reflection. Had he a right thus to dispose of the codicil? It conveyed to himself only a vested right; and, in the form of entail, established a similar claim for any son of his own,—nay, more; it set apart a sum of 25,000*l.* for the younger children of old Maudsley's daughter; and to this, Sophia was evidently entitled. The dowry, too, of Mrs. Armytage was settled at two thousand per annum. No! he could have no pretext for cancelling a legal document of so comprehensive a nature!

That Mrs. Armytage was cognizant of the existence of such a deed, never for a moment entered his mind. It was evident indeed that any person interested to *conceal*, would at once have *destroyed*, the paper—not left it in a place of such uncertain security. Arthur remembered to have heard that his grandfather's decease had been a very sudden event, the

result of port wine and apoplexy; and he also remembered that Lord Rotherham had mentioned to him the general surprise of the country on the old man's testamentary dispositions becoming known. So attached was he to his son-in-law, that his nearest friends were persuaded some ulterior bequest must have been made; and, at the request of Mrs. Armytage, a diligent search had been instituted for a will of later date than the one deposited in the deed-chest at his solicitor's.

All, therefore, was now clear; Mr. Maudsley had himself prepared a copy to be formally executed; and sudden death had interfered with his worldly projects. The codicil, (deposited in a secret drawer of a piece of furniture which Arthur recollected to have formerly stood in the room, known by the name of his grandfather's, but which was not likely to have attracted notice during the search, as a place of security) had remained untouched save by

the damps of time, till the officious business of an old nurse accidentally dislodged it from its hiding place!

And now a new difficulty presented itself. If, moved by feelings of deference towards his parent, Arthur resolved to suppress the execution of the deed during the lifetime of Mrs. Armytage, (unless subsequent events rendered such concealment impossible,) how could he demand of his wife a similar resignation of her rights? But why communicate the discovery to Marian?—why disturb *her* peace of mind by tantalizing visions of grandeur?

Alas! might she not be already aware of the existence of the deed?—It was in her hands Arthur had first found the paper. Had she not perused it?—Did she not already know all? Impossible!—So young, so girlish, so feebly-minded, how would she have been able to suppress, even for a moment, the expression of her joy and triumph? And had she not been walking with him, talking with

him, smiling with him, just as usual, for the last three hours? Had she not been prattling of Scarborough and Aunt Robsey—of the roses and the lilies—the thrushes and the blackbirds? Were not her thoughts simple, trivial, and unaspiring as ever? It was clear that she had read the leases, and the recipe for cleansing dog-kennels, but that the codicil had wholly escaped her.

And in this manner do most men pass judgment on their wives!

CHAPTER V.

Fre. See how she steps!
Nought but the native dignity of worth
E'er taught the moving form such noble grace.
Lady. Such lofty mien, and high assumed gait,
I've seen ere now, and men have called it pride.
DE MONTFORT.

ARTHUR ARMYTAGE was angry with himself on perceiving, as he rose the following morning, that a sleepless night had done nothing to tranquillize the flurry of his spirits. He had thought himself endowed with more self-command; yet all the philosophy he could summon to his aid did not prevent him from attempting to shave with the blunt edge of his razor, or from mistaking a green slipper for a Wellington boot. Fortunately he had already locked up in his desk the document

of documents; and resolutely determined to take no further step till the lapse of a week should have restored him to the full exercise of his faculties.

Never had his mother appeared so little amiable in his eyes as during the preceding evening, at the moment he was forming such generous resolutions in her favour. Like others, very many others, whose understanding is superior to their temper, Mrs. Armytage felt angry with herself for her misdoings of the morning, and renewed the offence lest her repentance should become perceptible. She would have given worlds that she had forborne from her injurious treatment of her son; yet still preserved towards him a cold and imperious demeanour. There was something, too, of duplicity in the whole affair of the feast—of hollow and pretended rejoicing, to disguise her own vexation of spirit, which disgusted her with herself. She was even provoked by Marian's discernment in discover-

ing that her presence was not wanted, and her prudence in remaining so quietly at home. "Master Arthur's lady and the little one" had been eagerly and respectfully inquired for by the tenantry — their healths drunk — their names saluted with cheers; for the gaffers and gammers of Holywell were not so deeply studied in the failings of human nature, and the peculiar frailty of their liege lady, as Mr. Wemmersley of Mill-Hill.

Arthur had never smarted under these provocations so keenly before. He determined, however, that no personal feeling should in the slightest degree influence his conduct in the great decision submitted to his judgment. He knew that no temporizing clause exists in the commandments of God, to render honour unto parents a contingent and voluntary duty. However disagreeable to others the imperiousness of his mother's disposition, to *him* the fault must remain sacred.

And, as the days passed on, it seemed as if

the novelty of his situation had awaked a thousand new perceptions in his mind. He had as much fault to find with himself as with Mrs. Armytage. He felt ashamed of the supineness with which he had submitted to dwindle down into a nonentity, and become the slave of accident. In his choice of a profession, in his choice of a wife, in all his comings and goings, he had allowed the fatal charm of subserviency thrown over his childhood, to operate to his disadvantage. In many instances, where his mother's influence must have been inoperative, he had submitted to become the tool of others.

His duties as a representative of the people, for instance, had been adopted without consideration, and executed without zeal; he had hitherto felt himself, in the house, to be a mere feather, blown by a chance wind upon its benches. His political principles were hereditarily harnessed upon him; and as the yoke sat lightly, he had scarcely yet examined into

the materials and fashioning. He had, in short, been depressed, heart, soul, and body, by the consciousness of dependence. His want of importance to others had prevented his feeling of due importance to himself.

But now, all was changed. A new spirit seemed to have entered into his frame. He felt capable of ministering to the general good; of conferring benefits; of promoting improvement. He was no longer a thing to be

> Whirled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees.

He might now *remove* rocks, pile stone on stone in goodly architecture, and clothe the waste with plantations. He had the will to do, the power to execute. Something of his mother's spirit was already kindling in his breast. He felt it *was* so; and would check himself and laugh in the midst of his self-communing, as he sauntered, hour after hour, amid the solitudes of Holywell Park.

To seek counsel in his unprecedented dilemma, Arthur felt to be impossible. Unsatisfactorily as he had connected himself, his wife's family did not afford a single adviser in whom he could repose his confidence. His solicitors were his mother's favoured men of business; and, moreover, his difficulty was of too delicate and chivalrous a nature to take refuge in an attorney's office. Lord Rotherham, although a man of easy temper and retiring habits, possessed a peculiar and most rigid sense of justice, which might prompt him as a duty, owing to the son of his deceased friend, to declare all to Mrs. Armytage; while Lord Greta entertained feelings towards that lady, such as could not fail to render him a prejudiced arbitrator. Dr. Grant was absent on his summer tour. The whole weight and responsibility of his determination must rest with himself.

The temptation was a fearful one! On one side, an independent position in society, fif-

teen thousand a year, a noble residence, a thriving and unencumbered estate, rich preferment, county influence, a stake in the country, his wife to be invested with honourable distinction, his sister's settlement in life to be secured; on the other, mortification, subservience, poverty, debt! his wife hourly humiliated, himself daily thwarted. It needed the full force of his conviction, that expulsion from Holywell would cause the death of his mother, to extend his season of deliberation!

Meanwhile, although her husband was too much self-engrossed to notice the fact, poor Marian was not gaining ground among her country neighbours. The Wemmersleys, who had been in the first instance greatly inclined to oppress her with their patronage by way of affronting Mrs. Armytage, withdrew their smiles the moment they found her an object of interest and laudation to their grand idol the Duchess of Spalding; and the childishness of manner which had been once called *naïveté*,

they now styled silliness and vulgarity. Lady Rotherham, not peculiarly gifted with conversational powers, but disposed towards Arthur's wife with almost motherly kindness, found Marian cold and uncommunicative; nor could Lady Laura disguise from her friend Miss Armytage her disappointment in the object of Arthur's choice.

"She is pretty, I admit; fair and delicate, and what common-place people call feminine, meaning vapid and uncharacterized. But who ever saw such a specimen of insensibility?"

"You are mistaken," replied Sophia; too wise to be over-eager in the defence of a person not in fault—"altogether mistaken."

"And then so deficient; so devoid of common understanding!"

"Rather, so uncultivated. Marian has very good sense. She wants nothing but tact."

"The usual want of foolish people."

"Of even wise people, who have not lived

in the world. She will improve in that respect, and so lose the charm of her present delightful simplicity."

"My dearest Sophia!—how long have you been smitten with this extraordinary passion for simpletons?"

"Not for simpletons. I like Mrs. Wemmersley as little as ever."

"Come—come—I have hopes of you yet. Mrs. Arthur in only your fool *par préférence*."

"Do not call her fool to me, lest you should get into the habit of calling her so to other people," replied Sophy firmly. "She has so many disadvantages to encounter, that it would be ungenerous of you to join in the outcry against her. Some day or other you will discover her merits, and reproach yourself with want of taste."

"But how am I to discover them? By what art of magnetism am I to rouse the entranced somnambulist?—Mrs. Arthur Army-

tage appears to be half asleep, or rather half alive."

"She is very timid."

"Timid!—I wish you had witnessed the pronounced negative she gave to mamma's invitation, just now!—I never heard a person more positive or more ungracious. Your brother tried to make her fix a day, even a very distant one, for going to Greta Castle:—but 'she was very much obliged to Lady Rotherham; it was out of her power.' Your mother sat looking daggers at her."

"You will admit then," said Sophia smiling, "that Marian has some courage,—some self-possession?"

"The courage possessed by all insensible people,—indifferent to the chance of giving pain."

"How obstinately do you blind yourself, my dear, dear Laura!" exclaimed Miss Armytage,—resolved that not even her zeal in

Marian's behalf should induce her to betray the secret of her sister-in-law's jealousy; which invariably produced so disadvantageous an influence on her manner, in presence of the Greta family. "But we will not dispute about it. I have often quarrelled with your mode of talking of mamma; I must now beg your forbearance towards Marian. Do not let me suppose you incapable of appreciating the excellent qualities of both my nearest relatives."

"Ever pleading the cause of others," cried her friend; "always with an olive branch between your lips!—Well! I confess my own unworthiness. You are sure to end by making me ashamed of myself; and, believe me, you are the only person from whom I could put up with any such humiliation. But you know I look upon you as a sister,—or rather——" she paused, and smiled significantly,—"sister-in-*law*."

"*That* you know is an interdicted chapter between us," said Miss Armytage, colouring deeply.

"Not now, or at least not for ever, I trust," persisted Lady Laura. "Greta has been doing wonders to deserve you. You cannot but be aware how greatly he distinguished himself in Parliament this Session."

"I rejoice to see by the papers—" Sophia began——

"No, no!" cried Lady Laura, impetuously; "you know you did *not* rejoice,—you know you did not care a straw about the matter; although—ungrateful as you are,—you cannot but be aware that you are his Agnes Sorel, and that my brother's exertions to get over his natural indolence are all owing to your exhortations—all owing to his desire to appear favorable in your eyes."

"For *his* sake, I hope *not*. Let us trust that Lord Greta's principles——"

"Principles!—principles!—talk of political principles to a man of five-and-twenty, desperately in love."

"I was not talking of *political* principles," persisted Sophia.

"Well, well, my dear Sophia, I have no doubt you were talking of exactly the right thing, only not exactly at the right moment. You know how forbearing I have been in not plaguing you about Greta;—that little word you once whispered to me about another person, convinced me that my influence would be useless. But now that other person is out of the question——"

"Why out of the question?" inquired Miss Armytage, trying to speak unconcernedly.

Lady Laura looked surprised, but was silent.

"No doubt you were alluding to Mr. Rainsford?" continued Sophia, summoning courage after a minute's pause. "Do you suppose

that his change of fortunes has created any obstacle to ——," she could not proceed. Even between two intimate friends of the same age, the chapter of loves and lovers is fatal to the interests of eloquence.

"Not his change of *fortunes*, my dear Sophia. But I beg your pardon for having touched on the subject. I thought you knew, —I concluded you were aware,—I—— We will talk of it some other time."

"No,—*now* if you please," said Sophia, faintly smiling. "If you beg my pardon, let it be for wishing to drop the subject before you have fully explained yourself."

"Indeed, I have no explanations to make: and must thank my usual giddiness for having hinted any thing to distress you."

"Nothing you have hinted will distress me half so much as the supposition that I do not know all," said Miss Armytage. "Dear Laura!"

And there was no resisting her look and

tone of supplication. "God forbid that I should do any thing to vex you, my best friend!" said Lady Laura, feelingly; "but I thought your brother had heard all *I* heard on the subject, and had told you all you are determined to learn from *me*. There certainly was a report before we left town, that Mr. Rainsford had come some months ago into a fortune, given up his profession, and was looking out for a wife."

"Was that all?" faltered Sophia, her self-confidence partly returning.

"Not quite all. They said he had formed an attachment for one of Lady Emily Roden's daughters."

"They *said!*—Such absurd things are reported in London!"

"Lady Honoria Spalding, who is cousin to Miss Roden, assured me she was engaged to Mr. Rainsford."

"How often have you admitted to me your

disbelief of every word uttered by the Spaldings!"

"Honoria could have no particular motive for deceiving me. And indeed I heard it from others."

"Others, perhaps, to whom she had related it?"

"I am glad to see you so unpersuadable," said Lady Laura.

"I *am* unpersuadable," replied Miss Armytage. "Where once I give my confidence, I find great difficulty in withdrawing it; particularly where (why should I deny it?) my own happiness is deeply concerned. One thing, however, my dear Laura, pray understand and believe. If this report prove true, no reproach can be attached to Edgar Rainsford. Not a shadow of engagement existed between us. He was perfectly at liberty to—" Sophia grew very pale;—she had not quite strength of mind or body to discuss the matter

as she could wish. But fortunately for her fortitude, they were just then summoned from her dressing-room into the drawing-room by a message from Mrs. Armytage. Fresh visiters had arrived; and Sophia was required to do the honours of Holywell to pretty little Rosamond Devonport.

Lady Laura Greta could not sufficiently admire the patient mildness of demeanour with which her friend bestowed her attention on the Maranhams and their protégée. She succeeded in appearing sufficiently interested in one of Miss Avarilla's most tedious metaphysical rhapsodies, — bore smilingly with the coarse raillery of Mistress Di—, inquired kindly after the infirm Margaret,—and entered cheerfully into the girlish chit-chat of Rosamond respecting Mr. Armytage's election ball,—for Sophia was the least selfish person in the world. Reared under the wing of a self-idolatress, she had been fortunate enough

to acquire that best and truest tenet of philosophy, that

> what happiness we justly call,
> Subsists not in the good of one, but all.

She had a really noble mind,—for it made her sensible of her own insignificance.

CHAPTER VI.

Comes up a fop, (I knew him but by fame,)
And seized my hand, and call'd me by my name—
"My dear, how dost?"

HORACE.—SAT. IX.

PEOPLE who take account of *fêtes*, according to their value in the midst of a London season, when the chandeliers are nightly blazing in hundreds of stately mansions, when the bow of Weippert is worn to its last hair, and a perpetual savour of ham and chicken is perceptible in the Gunterian precincts of Berkeley Square, cannot properly appreciate the importance of a ball in a remote provincial neighbourhood, such as that of Thoroton. A ball—an election ball—an election ball, too, involving all the wealth and family importance of the Armytages of Holywell, was a thing to rival

even the charms of the ensuing St. Leger, in the estimation of the younger members of the community.

Now it is a thing of custom in most towns, and especially so at Thoroton, for the crowning honours of the ball to take place immediately after the election, at the Inn wearing its colours and drinking its toasts after the politics of the successful candidate; and the Blue Boar accordingly pretended to the favours of Arthur Armytage. A question materially regarding the interests of the borough, having, however, summoned him to town immediately on his election, before the great event could be achieved, the promised ball was remitted till the close of the session; and now, when it could no longer with propriety be deferred, Mrs. Armytage, from some motive which it would have been difficult to guess, announced her gracious intention that it should take place at Holywell.

Gracious intentions, whether royal, imperial,

or simply simple, are often very inconvenient and ill-timed concessions. Arthur was satisfied that, though his mother might, "for that night only," purpose to put up with the manufacturers' wives, and even the leading tradesmen of the place, who in their turn might feel far more gratified by an invitation to Holywell Park than to the Blue Boar, had not the slightest notion of extending her hospitality to the endless tribe of strange objectionables, with whom an election, like misery, makes a man acquainted. Magnanimity might even induce her to tolerate the presence of his trusty, though not well-beloved Gumption; but the force of patience would no further go. What was to be done? He saw himself on the eve of giving inexpiable offence to his constituents; and yet, even had he found courage to say resolutely that custom must be his law, and the ball-room at the Blue Boar his head-quarters, how could he, just then, command the couple of hundred pounds, the

cost of such an entertainment; which, by this act of opposition, must necessarily fall upon himself? Once more, alas! he allowed himself to become the sport of time and tide; once more he repeated to himself, "I know I am doing wrong, but she must have her own way."

The spacious ball-room at Holywell, situated in what was termed, after its celebrated county architect, the Carr wing of the house, was accordingly opened for the purposes of beautification. The sound of music had not enlivened its coved orchestra since the ball given in honour of the birth of Master Arthur; but now, Turks' heads were brandished, cobwebs dispossessed, the old fashioned lustres and girandoles released from their canvass bags, the polished floor new rubbed, the crimson sofas uncovered. Succession-houses were doubly heated, to bring forward a show of fruit worthy the horticultural fame of Holywell—everything was to be on a noble scale; and the talisman

of an overflowing purse can work wonders even in an unmiraculous age;—make palm trees yield fruit at St. Petersburgh, and create a brilliant ball in the most rustic of rural regions.

Every one, with the exception of the hero of the event, seemed pleased; every invitation was accepted. The Rotherhams undertook to fill their house for the occasion. The two Maranhams, albeit unused to the festive mood, would neither refuse their young ward the pleasure of a ball, nor their old friend Mrs. Armytage the honour of their company. Marian liked the bustle of the affair, and was gratified to see her husband once more the object of his mother's kindness; and Sophia, whatever secret vexations might be preying on her spirits, was always happy in that which seemed to impart satisfaction to others. She agreed with Arthur, that the Blue Boar might have been the fitter place; but Holywell was incomparably the more agreeable.

It was just five days before the appointed 5th of August, and a covey of white nightcaps was already busily at work in the pastry, when Mrs. Armytage, who was never in such good humour as when her attention was claimed in a thousand directions to command and countermand, had been giving her opinion on the fixing of some new lamps, such as the exigencies of these light-loving times seemed to require in addition to the ancient splendours of the ball-room—when, on her way to the morning room through the conservatory, which formed the main channel of communication from one wing of the house to the other, she was struck by peals of most indecorous laughter—laughter so unrestrained that her formal nature would have decided it to be that of the housemaids, had the housemaids at such an hour been admissible in such a spot.

No!—Mrs. Arthur Armytage was the offender so extravagantly mirthful; and, between the intervals of her gaiety, Mrs. Armytage

discerned the accents of a strange voice. Who could be this very amusing visiter? It is true Marian had been sometimes heard to laugh quite as giddily at the antics of Moreton, but not lately: lately she had become sobered—saddened. Some very unusual excitement must have roused her to so animated a mood. A secret apprehension glanced into Mrs. Armytage's mind that Jack Baltimore had once more made his appearance to claim his share in the festivities of Holywell; and her countenance assumed its fiercest frown of outraged autocracy, as she made her way into the room.

But frowns would have been lost on the individual who occupied a place next to Marian on the sofa; and who, though lounging in a most familiar attitude, on the entrance of the lady of Holywell started up with an affable bow and smile, handed her a chair, begged her not to sit so near the door, and almost did the honours of her own house to the astonished

Mrs. Armytage. Of *him*, indeed, there needed no announcement. The shrug, the grimace, the self-confidence, the black moustache, the flashy waistcoat, were true to the fame of the Parisianized Lord Wyndham Spalding—in whom the most ineffable coxcombry was mingled with something of the tawdry air of a valet-de-chambre or provincial actor.

Miss Armytage, after the compliments of introduction, had already resumed her tapestry; and in the pauses of the visitor's flippant conversation, was pondering within herself *which* was the more offensive — the supercilious, silent, self-concentrated English dandyism of Leicester Spalding, or the vehement, garrulous, gorgeous impertinence of his brother. Between the dandy-couchant, and the dandy-rampant, she decided in favour of the former.

But Winsome Wyn, who, on continental principles, gave the young lady leave to ponder as much as she pleased—considering her silence and her tapestry-frame a matter

of course—afforded no such leisure to Mrs. Armytage. The lady of Holywell was quite personage enough to ensure his patronage—"a bore, in all probability—a woman of neither *la première* nor *la seconde jeunesse*, but still a species of Yorkshire *notabilité*—a person to be noticed."

"I have been congratulating my friend, Mrs. Armytage, on her *villeggiatura*," said he, although he had never uttered a syllable to Marian on the subject. "You have here a very pretty *campagne*—a little wild, perhaps, but positively very pretty. That is what I greatly approve in England. Your country houses do not pretend to *le grand genre*, as in France, where every château is built on the model of the Tuileries, and every garden grows as if planted by Le Nôtre. Here, each small proprietor indulges his own taste, his own whim, and is contented."

Mrs. Armytage, little used to find herself

addressed with praise more applicable to the villa-loving haberdashers of Fulham or Mile-end, was too much astonished to reply. But Lord Wyndham seldom needed a reply.

"The fact is, I so rarely visit Yorkshire, my progresses here are so few and far between, and, *grâces à Dieu!* fewer and further as I grow older and wiser, that I am too apt to invest the country with more than its due share of Gothicism. A man scarcely ever contrives to forget the grievances of the boy—the *corvée* of petticoat government and pedagogue government. Yorkshire is always Spalding Court—barbarous Spalding Court, to *me;* and I dare say my friend Armytage entertains just the same retrospective nausea towards the nursery discipline of Holywell. I remember we used to bless the Regent and the Shire of York together, over our *Château-Margaux* at the *Rocher!*"

Lord Wyndham's rapidity of utterance and

affectedly foreign accent prevented the whole of his *tirade* from reaching the comprehension of Mrs. Armytage—but she heard enough!

"The county of York can dispense, I fancy, with the suffrage of my son," said she.

"'Sparta hath many a worthier son than he!'"

"Oh! pardon me! Arthur is an excellent creature—I have a great opinion of Arthur. I was saying the other night at the Travellers' that Armytage was one of the best of living creatures. He has not done himself justice in town by living *faufilé* in that humdrum *clique* of Rotherhams and Gretas. Well-introduced, Arthur might have taken a place in London, instead of being lost among a drove of country squires—*bon seulement à mugir dans la chambre, comme des bœufs gras,* and never heard of elsewhere. But my friend Arthur cares so little for appearance! By the way, how does he get rid of himself here? He left us *à bride abattue, comme un courier de Rothschild,* the other day, in order to go and act *Le Seigneur de Vil-*

lage among his good and faithful tenantry. Did he play his part with discretion, my dear Mrs. Armytage?—and did the *Baillé* harangue him

> *'Ainsi qu' Alexandre le Grand*
> *A son entrée en Babylone?'* "

And his Lordship proceeded to sing, rather than to say, the opening *couplets* of Boieldieu's opera; while Arthur's mother, unaccustomed to hear her daughter-in-law addressed as "*Mrs.* Armytage," concluded that it was to her majestic self Lord Wyndham's term of endearment had been applied.

"Arthur is excessively fond of shooting," said Marian, feeling that some sort of answer was indispensable. "I think I saw him crossing the park with the keepers after breakfast."

"What sport on earth can the fellow find with the thermometer at 88° in the shade? What does he shoot?—butterflies—humble-bees?"

"Rabbits, I believe," said Marian, well

knowing that Arthur made his gun a pretext for going out early and staying out late.

"Grouse-shooting will begin shortly," added Sophia, "and then my brother will no longer want amusement."

"Grouse? Has he moors here at Holly-Hill? Lucky dog! while I, in penance for my sins, am obliged to forego the pleasantest party in Scotland to do the dutiful at Spalding Court. I shall certainly come and *désennuyer* myself by a few days' shooting with Arthur."

"My moors are preserved; I allow them to be shot upon only every second year," said Mrs. Armytage, calmly.

"If they are small, you are very right, my dear madam," cried Lord Wyndham. "*D'ailleurs*, it is the privilege of all proprietors to *régenter* their little dominions. I remember, once when I was hunting at Chantilly with the Duc de Bourbon—poor old soul!—he had a *hobereau* of a country neighbour who——"

"Is there good hunting at Spalding Court?" interrupted Marian, with a deep blush, dreading the anecdote, and its implied application to Mrs. Armytage.

"Excellent, I believe. But between my father's gout, my absenteeism, and the listlessness of my brothers—the Spalding hounds are chiefly kept for the amusement of the valets and the French cook. All Frenchmen, you know, martyrize themselves with the pretension of being fox-hunters. Do you remember, my dear Mrs. Armytage, poor little Montmorency coming back from Melton last winter with his arm in a sling, and swearing it was an *affaire d'honneur?*"

"Do you mean the little duke who was always singing at Lady Arabella's?"

"Exactly; one of her thousand and one knights. Poor dear Lady Arabella! What a good creature it is! Her face is her fortune—like the *laitière's* in the song! Half the world swears that a woman with the physiognomy of

a white negro cannot have been a *femme galante;* while the other half protests that a woman who has had so many *adorateurs* cannot have been always ugly. And so—*à quelque chose malheur est bon !*—she comes to pass for a beauty and a Lucretia."

Mrs. Armytage, to whom the slightest tone of libertinism was an offence, was now so greatly disgusted, that an exclamation, audibly contemptuous, broke from her lips, and reminded Lord Wyndham of her presence.

"But amid all this *bavardage,*" cried he, suddenly addressing her, "I forget half my errand here. You behold in me, my dear madam, a herald—the bearer of a flag of truce—from the house of Spalding. The Duchess (who is really a very well-natured woman, though I admit often tiresome enough) is apprehensive that you do not intend to invite her to your ball: and my sisters are *au désespoir.*"

"I should hardly presume," replied Mrs

Armytage, with proud humility, "to invite to an entertainment given in honour of my son's return to Parliament, the family of the defeated candidate."

"Excellent, excellent! — what a truly primitive and Great-British idea!" exclaimed Lord Wyndham, caressing his moustaches, and laughing heartily. "How deeply it would amaze my brother Leicester to hear you! — he who, I dare say, totally forgets that he ever stood for Thoroton; or, more likely still, fancies he was returned. Leicester is the most *insouciant* of listless men!"

"I have never, however, perceived any indifference on the part of the Duchess of Spalding, towards the electioneering interests of the family," said Mrs. Armytage, drily.

"Perhaps not,—while the excitement of the canvass lasted! But in my mother's position, excitements succeed each other so rapidly! — probably the very next week her feelings were just as much roused in trying to outbid the

Zoological Society, at some brute sale in the London Docks, for a Tapir, or a Jeribo, for the menagerie at Spalding Castle. After all, what signifies a seat in Parliament to a fellow like Leicester, unless he could get a dispensation for his valet to frank for him and hold his proxy? For my friend Armytage it *might* do something—perhaps get him made a Baronet."

"A Baronet!—Arthur Armytage of Holywell, whose grandfather had twice refused a Peerage!"

"Would it not be a considerable distance for the Duchess to come to a ball?" inquired Marian, hoping to divert her mother-in-law's attention.

"*That* is all arranged. The worthy Wemmersley people, at whose house I slept last night, and who seem to keep a sort of Spalding Arms whenever beds are in request, have invited the family to make a convenience

of them on this as on all other occasions. The Duchess was obliged to plead guilty of non-invitation. But as the days of Whig and Tory (praise to Heaven!) are as obsolete as the times of Guelph and Ghibelline, we trust, my dear madam, that you will ratify a general peace, by enabling me to bear back a formal invitation."

"If, under such circumstances, the Duchess of Spalding will condescend to visit me,"—answered Mrs. Armytage, secretly pleased with the prospect of seeing her Grace confounded among the crowd of Thorotonians, without having compromised her own dignity by an invitation;—"I shall feel greatly honoured."

"My diplomacy being ended then," cried he, rising to depart, "I have only to order my horse, offer you my homage, and make my way back to Mrs. Wemmersley, who is waiting to drive me home, and complete her arrangements with the Duchess. What am

I to say to my mother in answer to *her* invitation?" he inquired, lowering his tone as he addressed Marian.

"That we will be with her on the tenth," replied Mrs. Arthur.

"*Définitivement?*"

"*Définitivement!*"

"Enchanted to be the bearer of such good news. Farewell!—*au revoir!*—At what o'clock on the 5th?" added he, addressing Mrs. Armytage as he passed her towards the door.

"At any hour you please. Good morning." And his Lordship's parting bow was scarcely complete, or the door closed after him, before she ejaculated, "The most insupportable person I ever beheld in my life!" and, as if her irritation had been too long repressed, made her way straight through the folding windows, and was soon seen at a distance pacing with rapid steps the shrubbery walk.

"Will it not seem rather ungracious, my dear Marian, that you should go to Spalding

Court, so soon after excusing yourself to Lady Rotherham?" observed Sophy, when she found herself alone with her sister-in-law.

"I dare say Lady Rotherham will never trouble her head on the subject. She probably invited me only as a matter of ceremony, in the due course of country neighbourhood."

"I think not; I am sure she was sincerely anxious to make the acquaintance of my brother's wife."

The phrase was an unlucky one. Marian's sensibility was touched in a minute.

"Exactly!—those were the precise grounds on which I was to be admitted to Greta Castle; but they were not the only ones that decided me to stay away. Lady Rotherham is a very tiresome woman, who can talk only of her own health; and Lady Laura I consider very disagreeable; so abrupt—so examining—so careless of giving pain. In short, I cannot endure a single member of the family!"

"I trust you will alter your opinion," an-

swered Sophia, mildly; "for as our old and intimate friends, you are likely to see a great deal of the family."

"I never *shall* like them," retorted Marian.

"Are you quite sure that you are not using *shall* in its Irish sense? Do you not mean that you never *will?*"

"Well, then, I never *will!*" cried Marian, with a degree of positiveness wholly foreign to her character: "and I shall make it a condition with Arthur that he never forces me into their society. Do not be angry with me," said she, taking Sophia's hand, when she saw her sister-in-law vexed and surprised by this unusual display of petulance: "I cannot help it: you know I have not tact enough to conceal my faults or my feelings."

CHAPTER VII.

"Prythee, Trim," quoth my Uncle Toby, "what dost thou mean by honouring thy father and thy mother?"

"Allowing them, an't please your honour, three halfpence a-day out of my pay, when they grow old."

"And didst thou do that, Trim?" said Yorick.

"He did indeed," replied my Uncle Toby.

"Then, Trim," said Yorick, springing out of his chair, and taking the Corporal by the hand, "thou art the best commentator upon that part of the Decalogue; and I honour thee more for it, Corporal Trim, than if thou hadst a hand in the Talmud."

STERNE.

THE eve of the ball was now at hand; and the adroit Mademoiselle Célestine had prepared for her lady, and her lady's sister, simple white dresses, exactly alike, which she protested became them "*à ravir.*" Arthur was pleased to see Marian so readily cured of her taste for finery, and to observe so happy a spirit of unanimity prevailing between his sister and his

wife. Still, it occurred to him that the bride of Arthur Armytage of Holywell ought to make a somewhat more matronly appearance than the young lady of the house; and without wishing Marian to be finer, he would have been glad to have enabled her to appear more *richly* attired. In short, she had no jewels,—nothing but the tawdry, ill-set, sprawling topaz necklace, the wedding-gift of the Robseys, which her own improved taste kept closely ensconced within its morocco case. For half a day Arthur resolved to write to town for a few handsome ornaments for his wife. But how to account to his mother for so ill-advised an act of prodigality?

The night previous to the ball, however, when, having repented, he had also forgotten his resolution, Mrs. Armytage made her appearance in the drawing-room with two jewel-cases of similar dimensions in her hand; and Marian, looking up from her work, as one of them, being opened by her mother-in-law, displayed

a suit of costly brilliants, involuntarily uttered an exclamation concerning their beauty and resplendence.

"They are yours," said Mrs. Armytage, in her driest tone.

"*Mine?*" reiterated Marian, half startled and half annoyed.

"Yours—and this similar set, my dear Sophia, is for *you*."

Arthur's attention was now attracted from the book he was reading. He looked inquiringly towards the family group.

"It is now some years since I found occasion to wear my family jewels," resumed Mrs. Armytage, speaking to no one in particular, though virtually addressing her son: "but although too old to take pleasure in diamonds, I am not old enough to have lost my pleasure in *life*. I intend to live many years, and will therefore no longer deny myself the gratification of seeing these baubles worn by others. The fashion of the setting was old and heavy.

Nothing had been done to them since the time of my great-great-grandmother, Lady Clarissa Maudsley. But Rundell seems to have done them justice. The sets are exactly alike, and naturally belong to my two children."

Both Marian and Sophia were silent. Each expected the other to speak. There was something chilling in the preconcerted formality of this address. The gift, instead of assuming the interest of a token of affection, appeared rather to be a legal act of donation.

Arthur stammered out a few expressions of gratitude in the name of his wife. The specification of an exact division of her property between her two children, jarring against his secret knowledge of the untenability of her own claims, confused and distressed him. Mrs. Armytage was disposing of family heirlooms, which, even if lawfully her own, ought, as a matter of propriety, to have become the property of the wife of her son; but, under the

true circumstances of the case, her pompous benefaction appeared a mockery.

"But my dear mother," said Sophia, injudiciously enough, but unable to repress her consciousness of being the object of an inequitable distribution, "it would give me infinitely greater pride and pleasure that these family jewels should not be divided. Till I am married, they form an improper ornament for me. If I marry advantageously, I shall receive such gifts from my husband's family; or, if I marry poorly, which is far more likely, it would ill become me to display anything so magnificent. Pray allow me to place the two shares once more together."

"My dearest Sophy!" exclaimed Arthur, conscious that his disinterested sister was defrauded of property of far greater value by his own wilful act and deed,—"Can you for a moment suppose that Marian will not feel doubly gratified in wearing my mother's splen-

did presents, by knowing that you have been equally the object of her generosity? You wrong us both if you do not believe that we fully coincide in her just distribution."

Sophia dared not reply. She saw her mother greatly displeased by the mode in which her gifts were received: her daughter rebelling against her donation—her son sanctioning and confirming it. For although Mrs. Armytage thought nothing of her own sacrifice of the family jewels, intrinsically, she thought much of her right of disposing of them; and of the opportunity it conveyed to mark to her children her power, if not her intention, to bequeath the whole bulk of her property in equal shares between them.

"I am sorry," she coldly observed, "that you should any of you think it necessary to canvass the equity or propriety of a gift of mine. I flattered myself no dispute would or could arise on a point where my own will and inclination must necessarily give the law."

"None does or will arise!" cried Arthur, hoping to dispel the storm by giving a lively turn to the discussion, "except between these two young ladies, as to the comparative becomingness of their necklaces." And opening the cases, he busied himself in adorning his wife and sister with their new jewels. The blush with which Marian looked towards Mrs. Armytage, when her magnificent tiara sparkled in her fair hair, certainly proved that diamonds can be very becoming. To Sophia's subdued countenance they imparted no enhancement. She was really distressed by an occurrence which she felt to be an act of injustice towards her brother.

"Do not say another word on the subject, my dearest sister," said Arthur, when, on her mother's quitting the room, she ventured to give utterance to her regrets. "Very many reasons, which you must excuse me from detailing, render this division of the jewels the only circumstance that could reconcile me to

seeing them worn by Marian during the lifetime of my mother."

And this was strictly true. The family diamonds, valued at thirty thousand pounds, were expressly specified, with plate, furniture, and pictures, among the property entailed by old Maudsley upon his grandson; and Arthur was truly gratified that his sister should by this means receive some compensation for the deprivation he was inflicting upon her.

Nevertheless the affair gave rise to many disagreeable reflections. Arthur felt apprehensive that similar scenes might hereafter occur in the family, rendering the secret of which he was the depositary a still more painful burthen. He began to be alarmed at his own responsibility. How could he foresee to what extent Mrs. Armytage might take upon herself the alienation of the family property; or in what measure her wilfulness and caprice might render him hereafter accountable to heirs of his own? Already he had suffered a

week to elapse, in addition to that he had originally allowed himself for decision; and although every day and every hour added to his conviction that degradation from her present high estate of supremacy would be fatal to his mother, still his resolution wavered.

The greater part of the night succeeding the bestowal of the diamonds, Arthur Armytage gave to reflection. Night is a season favourable to nobleness of purpose. "The world is" then *not* "too much with us;" and our moral responsibility to God and man assumes a more demonstrated form. We are not ashamed of aspiring after virtue. There is no human sneer to wither our good intentions; no glitter of pompous illusions to dazzle the clearness of our perceptions; right and wrong resume the tangible and stedfast land-marks of their empire.

On the following day, therefore, while the gardeners were hurrying along the corridors of Holywell, arranging stands of exotics,—

footmen, unpowdered and jacketless, swearing at the housemaids, who could only scold them in return—cooks pounding over their mortars, and old Simmons groaning over the incalculable inroads into his beloved cellar—Arthur Armytage drew the precious document from his bureau; and without trusting himself to a re-perusal, enveloped and re-enveloped—sealed and re-sealed it;—mounted his horse, and rode off to Greta Castle.

"My dear Lord Rotherham," said he, having requested a private interview with his father's friend—"I am come to demand a favour at your hands. Take charge of this packet for me in your family-deed chest, for it is of consequence to others besides myself; and promise me that whatever instances I may hereafter use to persuade you to give it up to me during the lifetime of my mother, you will be inflexible to my demand."

"Refuse a man possession of his own property?"—cried Lord Rotherham, laughing.

"Why, my dear friend Arthur, you are beside yourself."

But Arthur could not laugh in return. He was deeply impressed by the act of duty he was performing.

"I conclude," resumed Lord Rotherham, "that the importance of the paternal estate has induced you to make your will?—Quite right. But do not follow the fancy of most young people, and imagine that, because you have made your will, you have taken a step towards the grave! Make me your Custos Rotulorum, or your executor, or what you will—even guardian, to little Miss Harriet Armytage, if you choose; though I am somewhat old now for such an office;—but don't put so serious a face upon the matter."

Arthur tried to throw off his oppression of spirits; tried to smile; tried to enjoy the rallying of his old friend; but it would not do. "At all events," said he, "tell me, my dear Lord, that you accede to my request!"

"But you may hereafter desire to alter this will—to revoke—to cancel it!"

"Not likely," said Arthur, unable to explain away Lord Rotherham's delusion.

"You cannot tell. You are at the age, Arthur, when a man thinks every new resolution irrevocable, and takes not into account the unforeseen contingencies of life,—the expediences,—the——"

"Believe me this is a case with which no event, hereafter occurring, can interfere."

"My dear boy, no such case can exist in human life! I have no doubt that your proposition is motived by the most upright intentions—by self-mistrust—which, in matters of pecuniary interest, becomes a virtue. But do not attempt to shackle yourself by unnecessary bonds. Be a free agent; leave the control of your conduct to the firmness of your own principles. I talk to you, Arthur, as I would to a son of my own."

"I know it,—I feel it,—" said young Army-

tage, extending his hand to so considerate a counsellor; "and I am unfortunately not at liberty to lay before you the premises on which I know you would ground a different conclusion. I will, however, at your suggestion, modify my terms. Promise me that you will never restore me the packet, unless you consider, on hearing the motive of my application, that I am in honour and equity entitled to demand it?"

"You become more and more mysterious. So much, however, I think I may concede without danger to either of us. Meanwhile, I will, if you please, endorse the paper with your conditions, and our mutual signatures. After which I shall briefly state, in an envelope, the circumstances of the deposit; that in case of my demise, it may recur to your possession."

"Rather remain in the hands of my friend Greta, on the same terms," added Arthur.

"Well, well! — *that* you shall settle be-

tween you when I am dead and gone," said Lord Rotherham. "You seem terribly afraid of yourself,—and it seems I cannot put you into heart." And when, after endorsing the document with the terms proposed, he turned from his writing-table to put the pen into Arthur's hand, and saw him looking pale and agitated, he added, "My dear fellow, I shall begin to fancy that your packet is something of the Caleb Williams sort, and that it contains the confession of a murder!"

"Not exactly," was the faint reply. "If it were connected with any thing blameable or dishonourable, I should scarcely seek such a depositary as my father's friend."

"And now that our mysterious business is over," said his Lordship, having lodged the packet in the iron closet in his private library, "pray tell me, have you not chosen to make a day of pleasure a day of business? Is not this the night of the Holywell ball?"

"It is."

"I concluded so, because my son has managed to get his Treasury holidays a week before his time. I expect Greta from town this afternoon; and on the 11th, you know, he is off to the Moors."

"I did *not* know:—but I am very glad to hear he is coming, even for so short a time."

"He has taken Lochvarlach for the season, with Lord Edward Brereton and young Dumbarton. They are coming down together."

"And to Holywell to-night, of course?"

"Of course. Laura no doubt has taken care to secure herself partners; and unless you bespeak your sister for Greta, I fancy he will be sadly mortified. They don't get on quite so well together as I could wish.—Eh! Arthur?"

"I believe we had better leave them to settle their own affairs," said Arthur, now really smiling; for he was pleased by Lord Rotherham's explicit avowal of interest in the match. "Interference always does harm."

"I fear so!" replied the kind-hearted father, secretly referring to the injudicious interference which, he little doubted, had been the means of preventing Arthur from becoming his son-in-law. "But you had better stay and dine here, Armytage?—You will, only be in the way at Holywell, and get a bad dinner. A ball is fatal to all comfort and quiet!—better stay and dine here, and join the early detachment of our party?—Lady Rotherham and Laura, I know, are to be at Holywell in time to air the rooms."

Arthur excused himself. "He feared he might be wanted at home."

"Not *you!*—My friend Mrs. Armytage is the last person to need assistance in her arrangements. She will be very glad to get rid of you."

Again Arthur excused himself: but when, half an hour afterwards, as he was sitting with Lady Rotherham and her daughter, his friend Greta and the rest of the London party made

their appearance, he became more persuadeable. Arthur had been living of late almost exclusively among women. He was tired of tapestry, nursery, white satin, and diamonds; and eager to chat of politics and clubs,—horses and dogs,—Mantons and moors,—and all the other toys of manhood. Nothing now appeared so easy as to send back his horse and groom, with a verbal message to Marian—"His love—he had been detained to dine at Greta Castle. He should return home early to dress."

CHAPTER VIII.

Within, 'twas brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright,
As when the setting sun has given
Ten thousand hues to summer's even;
And, from their tissue, Fancy frames
Aërial knights and fairy dames.

SCOTT.

EVEN in an establishment so regular as that of the Rotherhams, the routine of punctuality is not secure from accident. Dinner had been ordered an hour earlier than usual, in compliment to the Holywell ball. But the four young men had unluckily thought fit to make the tour of the stables and kennels, and pass sentence on the Dons and Pontos who were to set forward with their servants towards the Highlands on the following day. And then,

Lord Dumbarton was a dandy, and insisted on a bath after the fatigues of a journey and the vapours of the stables; and, from one indiscretion to another, dinner was kept waiting, and the cook, as well as the turbot, in hot water.

Lady Rotherham's carriage, too, was ordered for half-past seven; but it was eight before Arthur quitted the dining-room, and they had still an hour's drive before them.

"I fear we are late, Mr. Armytage," said the good-humoured Lady R., as he assisted her into the carriage; "but I will take all upon myself with your mother."

"Nevertheless," added Lady Laura, laughing, "if the people should be arrived, and the ball begun?"

"Don't talk of such a thing!" exclaimed Arthur; and he began to rejoice in the excellence of Lord Rotherham's horses. "At all events, the ball cannot commence till I make

my appearance, for I understand it is necessary for me to open it."

"Your wife rather, I should imagine," said Lady Laura.

"No," interrupted her ceremonious mother, "not unless your brother member were here to be her partner. It is for the new member to open the ball, with the lady of the highest rank present."

"That, thank Heaven! will be yourself," said Arthur, turning to Lady Laura.

"Fie, fie!—What would the Duchess of Spalding say if she heard you?—You forget Honoria and Amabel?"

"I wish I could!—I would as soon dance with my wife's poodle! No!—If they arrive in time, I shall choose to understand that I am to dance with the Mrs. Mayoress of Thoroton. At my election ball, *she* must necessarily be the first and fairest."

"You might have chosen a more disagree-

able person," said Lady Laura. "The Mrs. Mayoress of the year is the wife of the great stocking-weaver, who has done so much good to the poor of Thoroton; and a remarkably pretty, pleasant woman. She dined the other day at the castle, and we found her a great acquisition to the party."

A turn of the road leading to the spot where, on his return home from Spalding Court, Arthur had given way to such singular presentiments, now brought them to a distant view of Holywell. A stream of light blazed from its windows. The illumination of the house was complete! Lady Rotherham kindly directed Arthur to hasten her coachman. But, alas! as they approached the house, they found themselves in a string of carriages proceeding at the foot's pace indispensable to afford young ladies time for due care of their blonde and blush roses, in alighting at the scene of display. Arthur wisely determined to gain the

house on foot; and, somewhat less than five minutes having enabled him to complete his toilet, he entered the ball-room at one door, just as Lady Rotherham and her daughter arrived at the other. But, alas! his offences were already numbered!—His mother, in a most majestic and Mahomedan turban, looked as awful as if fresh from the massacre at Scio, and frowned her silent reproaches. Poor Arthur was bowed to and curtsied to—congratulated—thanked—his hands shaken—his health inquired after; but, all the time, he scarcely knew whose bows he was returning—whose civilities reciprocating. Young, handsome, prosperous, popular member as he was, his feelings were engrossed by apprehensions of an explosion of anger from Mrs. Armytage.

"Are the Spaldings arrived?" he inquired of Sophia, whose soothing smile was the first agreeable object that struck him in the ball-room.

"Not yet."

"Thank Heaven!—Lady Laura, it seems I am privileged to claim your hand."

"You forget the Lady Mayoress?"

"No, no!—She was only my *pis-aller* against Lady Honoria. Sophy, go, like a good creature, and inquire of my mother if she wishes the dancing to begin. *I* dare not accost her at present."

"She does. She has just ordered the band to play. There!—Lead your partner to the top of the room."

And it was not till he had elbowed a way for Lady Laura Greta through the crowd, and placed her at the head of the set rapidly forming, that Arthur found himself opposite to Marian. Marian, all elegance, all brilliancy, all beauty—prettier, a thousand times, than he had ever seen her look before! She was pale, indeed,—unusually pale; but that might arise from the glare of the lights, or the reflection of her resplendent diamonds. He was about to advance and take her hand, but Lady Laura

was already in the act of greeting; and, turning to his wife's partner, he was astonished to perceive Lord Wyndham Spalding!

"*You* here, my dear fellow,—and so early?" was his involuntary exclamation.

"*Recriez-vous*—I don't wonder!" answered Winsome Wyn; "for I am actually going to perpetrate, *tant bien que mal,* an English *contre-danse;* a feat which I have never attempted since we used to be called at Eton into old Birch's parlour on state occasions, to stand up with *les Demoiselles Birch.*"

Marian's pale face was just now again visible; but Arthur had only a moment to nod and smile. The band played, the dance commenced; and all was shoving and shuffling, panting and poussetting; everything which the customs of our forefathers conjured up to render a ball-room a place of hard labour and penance. A minute's space necessarily ensued before Lord Wyndham and his partner followed the leaders of the race—just long

enough to enable Arthur's wife to overhear the exclamations of the idle throng behind her—"Lady Laura and young Armytage!"—"What a handsome couple!"—"*I* always thought they would have made a match?"—"Yes! *that* would have been quite a Yorkshire wedding—quite a suitable connexion!"

She looked again, and admitted the truth of the remark. Yes! they were indeed a well-assorted couple! Lady Laura's tall and finely-formed figure, her rich dark hair and look of distinction, accorded well with the noble person and gentlemanly, unaffected manners of Arthur. Everybody in the room, no doubt, must see them as she saw them. All his friends must sympathize with Mrs. Armytage's regret that Lady Laura was not her daughter-in-law, and, in contempt for her insignificant self, tears came into her eyes,

"And her ears tingled, and her colour fled;"

and, under this disadvantageous aspect, it became her task to lead down the dance, and

attract, for the first time, the criticisms of her country neighbours. It was natural for a person so timid to attach to herself the scarcely repressed titter and whispers of contempt that followed her movements. *She* saw not the looks of wonder and ridicule directed towards the elaborate affectations of her partner, whose studs of pendent pearls, red velvet waistcoat, and glittering guard-chain, gave him in the eyes of the unsophisticated Thorotonians the air of a mountebank. *She* heard not the interrogatories that followed—"Who is the young lady with whom that strange coxcomb is dancing?"—"Don't you *know?*—our Member's wife!"—"Well, I protest, I never saw a more modest, elegant little woman!"

But though Marian heard not the praises lavished on herself, Miss Armytage heard; and, hearing with delight and pride, was vexed to perceive with how much more graciousness than was desirable Mrs. Arthur received the attentions of her partner. The motive, So-

phia perfectly understood; and made due allowance for Marian's shyness, and desire to disguise it by conversing familiarly with the only individual in the room with whom she was much acquainted. The same cause which induced Arthur to talk and laugh with Lady Laura, prompted his wife to chat and smile with the grimacing dandy, whose jargon reminded her of the pleasures and amusements of the preceding winter, ere her Holywell mortifications had been conjured up around her. The wives and daughters of her husband's constituents were, however, less indulgent than his sister.

Things went still worse when Marian arrived at the bottom of the dance, for *there* she felt quite unequal to retain her place by the side of Lady Laura;—Lady Laura—for the enjoyment of whose society her husband had deserted her at the trying moment of welcoming his guests; exposing her to the painful consciousness of his neglect at the time when *his*

presence and her own presence of mind were needed most. Instead, therefore, of following the obligation imposed on all honourable contra-dancers of "dancing up" in their turn—to the importance of which Lady Laura's provincial experience rendered her duly sensible,—away she went with Lord Wyndham,—on the plea of requiring rest; and during the remainder of the set, they occupied a quiet corner of the ball-room, and a considerable share of the observation of its guests.

So engrossed did they appear with each other, that no one ventured to approach them, till the remainder of the Greta Castle party made their appearance—when Lord Dumbarton, an intimate Paris acquaintance of both, came to demand the hand of Marian for the quadrille which they hoped would follow the set demanded as a sacrifice to country customs. A minute afterwards, Arthur came to whisper a request to Marian, in the name of his mother, that she would dance the second dance with

the Mayor of Thoroton, whom she had already once refused, on the grounds of a long-standing engagement to Lord Wyndham. But a jealous wife is not particularly accessible to persuasion. Marian declared herself again engaged; protested she would not dance with the Mayor, would not join another contra-dance; and after various remonstrances against the affront thus offered to the man in authority, Arthur Armytage observed to Lord Greta, who was standing by—

"Sophia volunteered to be his partner for the first set. Do, my dear Greta, ask your sister to honour him with her hand for the next. Or stay, I will go and make the request myself—I am sure Lady Laura will not refuse me."

Marian turned a deaf ear, but not a hardened heart, to this free admission of his influence. But she had no leisure for mortification. At that moment, the Duchess of Spalding, who had just entered the room, flew with extended hands to greet her,—all

smiles and courtesy,—evidently determined to make and consider her the leading personage of the evening. Leaning on her arm, the great lady, whom the Wemmersley's affectation of late hours had compelled to arrive two hours too late, pressed her way through the ball-room in search of Mrs. Armytage; who had already deserted her post of reception, in order to be more particular in her attentions to her Thoroton guests. For it was not in playing the hostess that her foible made itself apparent. Her manners on public occasions were marked by the dignified simplicity of a perfect gentlewoman. In her mode of receiving the *maniérée* and restless Duchess, the superiority of Mrs. Armytage was strikingly perceptible.

Meanwhile, the sudden blazing forth of the Mill Hill party did not tend to increase the hilarity of the evening:—the arrival of the great people of the neighbourhood in a country ball-room seldom does. For a moment their

appearance engrosses general attention. The provincials begin to admeasure themselves by a new standard; and, well content with their own attractions a minute before, now decide themselves to be well or ill dressed, as they more or less resemble the idols of the hour. The Duchess was attired in a perfectly plain white satin dress, with a profusion of magnificent diamonds: — the country ladies, who, having no magnificent diamonds, had made themselves tawdry in striving to be splendid,— began to be heartily ashamed of their frippery, —felt uneasy, and looked cross.

Then Mrs. A. left off talking to her neighbour Mrs. B., lest she should lose the opportunity of attracting a passing bow from her Grace; while Mrs. B. looked glumpily away, lest her spinster neighbour Miss C. should suspect her of being servilely ambitious of aristocratic patronage. All who had voted against Lord Leicester Spalding, fancied the Duchess must bear them a grudge;—all who

did not happen to visit Mrs. Wemmersley, trembled lest the Duchess should vote them ungenteel. Most of the parties present felt far less comfortable than before she entered the room.

And then the really pretty, but finical, fluttering, fanciful ladies Amabel and Honoria, were immediately taken up with Lord Edward Brereton and Lord Greta; and made off in quest of Lady Laura, not because they liked or admired her, but because she was the only person present with whom they could keep up the free-masonries of *caste;* and although the high-minded Laura, far better pleased to converse with her entertaining well-informed partner, the mayor, strove to extricate herself from the group, all the fine people stood apart laughing and chatting together,—as if winnowed from the surrounding chaff,—returning, with most overstrained affability, the tokens of recognition somewhat too obsequiously bestowed upon them by the females of the

Yorkshire squires; and standing ostentatiously aside whenever any one attempted to pass them,—as much as to say—"for worlds do not let me afford you an opportunity of saying that a person of *my* consequence condescended to treat you with incivility!" Mrs. Wemmersley meanwhile, her vanity buoyant beyond all control, kept fluttering like a butterfly round the knot of exclusives;—the pink feathers of her toque in perpetual motion, and her whole countenance illuminated by the reflection of ducal sunshine!

How different all this from the rational cheerfulness and companionableness of the Gretas,—from the mild conciliation of Sophia Armytage! Yet Marian saw it otherwise! Marian was captivated by the eager attentions that seemed to raise her into importance; exhilarated by the gabble of artificial gaiety, which re-assured the timidity of her nature. She even managed to forget Mrs. Armytage, while she listened to the prattling folly of

Lady Honoria and her brothers,—the lively quizzing of Lord Edward Brereton, the soothing flatteries of the Duchess. The three hundred ill-natured persons present were nothing to her now. Arthur and Lady Laura could not fail to see that there *were* those who admired and sought her. Her colour and her spirits rose. She looked very pretty and behaved very foolishly. The neglected Thorotonians, having for half an hour adored the Spaldings, and another half hour admired them, soon began to criticise,—to blame, to feel affronted. Long before supper was announced they had decided among themselves that Mrs. Arthur Armytage was a giddy young woman;—totally disqualified for the wife of a popular member.

The supper-table is, however, a marvellous redresser of grievances and soother of woes—"Tired nature's boon restorer, balmy Champagne," dulcifies the tide of human bitterness: and while turkey-poults, tongues, jellies,

peaches, and nectarines disappeared, public serenity was for a time restored. Arthur Armytage circulated round the tables like a postman, taking care that his constituents were attended to; while the Duchess, and the dandies, and the member's wife, and all the rest of their tribulations, were happily hidden from the view by the towering bouquets of the gold plateau vases at the head of the room. All began to admit that they were better off than at the Blue Boar, and that the entertainment did honour to the hospitality of Mrs. Armytage of Holywell.

New clouds, however, were gathering. A contra-dance after supper was felt to be a national duty; but behind those fatal vases a plot had been already concocted by the recondites for rewarding their previous self-denial, not by a quadrille, but a galoppe. The two fair Spaldings, Marian, Mrs. Wemmersley, and two or three London-going belles of the neighbourhood, were gallopers, which would form a

sufficient party—the perfect audacity of several of the aspirants duly considered. But the exotic dance, now for the first time introduced to Thorotonian admiration, seemed to strike consternation into all beholders. It was like the bursting of a thunderstorm. Tender mothers began to gather their chickens under their wings, and elderly gentlemen to shrug their shoulders. Mrs. Armytage, petrified that any one should have interfered with the march of the evening's amusements, was doubly paralyzed by the first aspect of the dance, and by beholding her daughter-in-law among the most expert of the rompers. She stood awful and severe as a statue of Nemesis!

"My dearest Laura," whispered Sophia to her friend, "I know you sometimes gallop at Almack's. Do pray stand up to-night, and Mamma will cease to discern anything objectionable in the dance. I see she is greatly displeased with Marian."

"Willingly, if I can find your brother. I never gallop with strangers."

"There he is, talking to Marian;" and away went Sophia to invite Arthur, in his wife's hearing and in the name of her friend, to become the partner of Lady Laura.

Marian immediately turned away, and began flirting, in a hurried manner, with Lord Wyndham. Unluckily, in the next breathless pause of their gallope, they anchored close to Mrs. Armytage, who was receiving the parting compliments of the Mayoress.

"Positively this little interlude of civilization is quite refreshing, my dear Madam," said Lord Wyndham, judiciously interrupting them. "And yet I am assured our Heathens are somewhat scandalized? *Pauvres chers innocens!—ça fait hausser les épaules!*"

"It does indeed!" said Mrs. Armytage, affecting to misunderstand him. "A more disgusting exhibition I never witnessed. In

this country—in this county—I am not apprehensive of seeing it naturalized."

"Probably not, probably not," was the flippant reply. "*En fait de morale,* the English so grievously mistrust themselves, that they are forced to rely for security, like the people of Holland, against an inundation of wickedness, upon dykes so vastly high and ponderous, that one might as well live in a saw-pit. *On s'ecrase par la pésanteur de ses vertus!*"

To evade all chance of a reply, away he went whirling poor Marian into the vortex; while Mrs. Armytage's attention was soon taken up with the faint adieus of poor, tired Lady Rotherham, who had already bespoken the Thoroton apothecary to visit her on the morrow. Other departures followed; and the ill-assorted party broke up some hours earlier than is customary on similar occasions.

The last provocation received by Mrs. Ar-

mytage that evening, was some particularly private whispering between the Duchess of Spalding and Marian, as they bade each other a tender farewell at parting.

CHAPTER IX.

You are more saucy with lords and honourable personages, than the heraldry of your birth and virtues gives you commission.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE day following a ball at home is usually a day of bitterness, headache, and mortification. Faded garlands, fragments of broken glasses, the smell of lamp-oil, the memory-haunting grunt of the violoncello, sleepy footmen, awkward supernumeraries—conspire to render the house insupportable. Holywell had not often been so disorganized in its economy as on the 6th of August. Simmons and his aged contemporaries, in spite of all the foreign aid afforded to their labours, were most of them ill in bed. The assistants down from town

were drunk with Yorkshire ale—nothing was right. Mrs. Armytage, thoroughly discomposed, inveighed against the disorderliness of modern servants. Arthur thought of the Blue Boar, and held his peace.

Other disagreeables, too, became gradually evident. Gumption and many of the leading Thorotonians, had absented themselves from the ball, and without even sending excuses. Honoured in their own persons by an invitation, they had been offended in that of some uncle or cousin accidentally omitted. Others, who pretended to rigour of political principles, came only to display their indignation at the presence of the Spalding family. The attorney who had lampooned the Duchess at the last election, and the attorney's partner who had caricatured her, felt themselves insulted by having been betrayed into the presence of their victim.

There had been a fight, moreover, among the servants, in drawing up the carriages, in which one of the Holywell stable-men had

broken his arm; and scarcely was the late breakfast over, when the apothecary asked an audience of Mrs. Armytage, to inform her that Jack Aldworth, having a contusion on his head, and the fumes of much punch within it, was in a high fever, and delirious; while at the same moment Mr. Wemmersley was ushered into the drawing-room to congratulate Mrs. Armytage on the brilliant success of her ball. "He was grieved, however, to find from Mr. Senna, whom he had met on the road, that poor Lady Rotherham was laid up with a severe rheumatism, from the draughts in the supper-room; and that a panel of the Mayor's new landau had been broken. But all these were trifles."

Mrs. Armytage, a good, though not indulgent mistress, was just then too much preoccupied by the danger of her servant, the son of an old tenant, to care for coach-panels or aristocratic finger-aches. She did not think the amusement of three hundred idle individuals

cheaply purchased by the life of one poor groom; and was deeply concerned for Jack Aldworth.

"I am quite amazed, my dear fellow," continued Wemmersley, turning amicably to Arthur, "to find that so much ill-will has been stirred up against you at Thoroton. I always feared you would find Gumption a slippery fellow; and, under present existing circumstances, if a general election should come on, —as it must, before long,—he would certainly throw you over."

"Throw me over?"

"I should rather say throw you *out*—throw you out for the borough of Thoroton."

"Even had he the inclination, I do not admit that he has the power."

"The *power?* Who can calculate on the ways and means of a jobbing attorney? In these revolutionary times, (for which we have to thank the madness of such people as your friends the Gretas and Co.,) *no* seat is safe.

Thoroton is at present one of the yea-nays —half-Whig, half-Tory—or, more properly speaking, half-Spalding, half-Armytage. But this species of influence is becoming a doubtful tenure; and if Gumption were to bring down some man of the people, or himself set up on the independent interest as a frank Radical,—there might be a curious turn of affairs."

"Mr. Gumption a Radical!" ejaculated Sophia.

"Yes! my dear Miss Armytage. When he was clerk to my friend the Duke of Spalding's agent—I admit that the man was a Tory;—turned out of his office, he attached himself a few months ago to Armytage and the Whigs;—and now that my friend Arthur has managed to affront him by not inviting his whole kith, kin, and acquaintance to the Holywell ball—take my word for it he will sulk into Radicalism, and there is no saying what man he may not bring down upon the neighbour-

hood!—A blacking-maker—a prize-fighter—Heaven knows what!"

Arthur, remembering that for Wemmersley's tenancy of Mill Hill the neighbourhood was wholly indebted to Gumption, secretly admitted that there was indeed no limit to the attorney's powers of mischief.

"If Mr. Gumption imagines," said he aloud, "that his services at my election (which have been largely remunerated) are to tie me down his slave for the remainder of my days, he is strangely mistaken. I owe my seat entirely to my family interest."

"But you forget that your family interest was about to bring in Reginald Maudsley," observed Wemmersley, lowering his voice, although he perceived that Mrs. Armytage was busy giving directions to a servant at the further end of the room. "If Gumption had not proposed you five minutes before——"

"Well, well!—do not let us fight our election battle over again!" cried Arthur, dreading

that his mother should overhear. "I took particular care that your protégé Gumption should have an especial invitation last night; and cannot see that he has cause for complaint."

"Not when he had sold you to the people at the Blue Boar, and your innovations on Thorotonian customs have broken his bargain? They will certainly come upon him for twenty of his thirty pieces of silver! Lomax was quite horrified this morning, when, as we were talking the business over with the Spaldings, a few of the sewers and *cloacæ* undermining that goodly edifice the British constitution, were first laid bare before his wondering eyes!"

"Lomax?—is *he* here still?" cried Arthur, wishing to change the conversation, as he saw his mother return towards her customary seat. "Why did you not bring him with you last night? I understood he was gone to the continent."

"Gone only to pass a month at Paris, and

already returned," said Wemmersley angrily. "I fancy he finds himself too comfortable at Mill Hill for us to get rid of him in a hurry." ("My wife's rich relation from Carolina" was evidently out of favour.) "And as to bringing him to the ball," continued Wemmersley, "he *was* here. Is it possible that you did not see him? intruding his odious toadyism on the Spaldings—and——"

"Your free and independent citizen, toady a Duchess?" said Sophia, laughing. "What a falling-off was there!"

"I never yet saw a Yankee, who would not fall down on his knees before a coronet!" cried Wemmersley, quite out of sorts. "They are the meanest worshippers of rank on earth. The thing has the charm of novelty to them; and a city knight is greater than Washington in their eyes!"

"Fie — fie — you are angry!" said Miss Armytage. "Do not compromise the independence of mind of a whole nation,

in retribution upon one Mr. Leonidas Lomax."

"I might have guessed at his secret sin," continued Wemmersley, "for I remember he was always telling me that his great grandmother was descended from an Irish earl and the founder of his family, brother to a bishop. But still, I never expected to see him dancing attendance after the Duchess."

"What a bore the Spaldings must find him!" said Marian, too tired to mingle much in the conversation.

"Indeed I don't know. He has written over to procure the Duchess a colony of beavers for her menagerie; and presented Lady Amabel with a set of Indian mocassins and bark canoes, which he had refused a hundred times to my little girl."

"How very amusing! Perhaps he has fallen in love with her!" said Marian. "I must question Lady Amabel about this outlandish adorer."

"If you had not been too much engrossed last night by the attentions of so many admiring friends," observed Wemmersley spitefully, "you would have had sufficient proof to the contrary."

"Indeed! Perhaps, then, the attraction lies with Lady Honoria? She is certainly the prettier of the two."

"Neither of them is so pretty as the real object of the absurd old coxcomb's attentions."

"Lady Laura Greta, perhaps?" said Arthur, much diverted by the petulance of the disappointed Wemmersley.

"No!—Lomax's tender heart was touched in the spring-time, among rose-bushes and nightingales, when Gretas and Spaldings, and members of parliament were amusing themselves together in London."

"I do believe it is Sophia!" cried Arthur; "My dear sister, I wish you joy!"

"The thing is hardly worth so much guessing," said Wemmersley. "I believe my kins-

man's feelings were moved in the first instance by the first sight of a feudal moat, and the historical associations of a battlemented walk. These things are wanting in America——"

"Di Maranham, as I live!" exclaimed Arthur, laughingly; "a very suitable match."

"Wrong again. Lomax likes old architecture—but not old women."

"Then it must be Rosamond Devonport!" said Miss Armytage. "How pretty she was looking last night!"

"Yes!—I heard Lomax protesting to the Duchess that she was the sweetest *gurl* in the room."

"I do believe," said Marian, struck by a sudden reminiscence, "that it was Mr. Lomax who was dangling after Rosamond, dressed like a bad imitation of Lord Wyndham!—I did not in the least recognize him."

"How should you?—He has returned from Paris, completely metamorphosed; fine trinkets,—fine waistcoats,—pinched, padded, painted

for aught I know; with an Adonis ring, and a pair of fixed spurs. Just the way with people from half-civilized countries! Regarding all these things as curious works of art, they load themselves with them, as they would buy a picture or a cameo. A Yankee belle, with the finest head of hair, spends half her income in false curls; and such is the case with Lomax; —the savage is beginning to break out in him."

"And is my little friend Rose proud of her conquest?" inquired Sophia.

"Amused perhaps!—But the three old women are too cunning to laugh at such a chance for their ward; Lomax has a clear twelve thousand a year, as my wife was foolish enough to proclaim to every one in the neighbourhood, when he first arrived at Mill Hill."

"Very indiscreet!" observed Arthur, "considering how many spinsters we have in the neighbourhood. Lady Laura Greta,—Miss Armytage——"

"Pray do not include your sister's name in any such absurd enumeration!" interrupted Mrs. Armytage, breaking forth from her long silence. "Mr. Lomax has very wisely confined his pretensions to his own level. Miss Devonport and himself are both Creoles, and will make a very appropriate match."

"Appropriate?—oh, my dear mother!—Think of pretty little Rose, with her graceful manners and interesting position!"

"I see nothing interesting in her position. In my opinion, people should never be introduced into society upon ambiguous grounds. *Who* is Miss Devonport?—No one knows!—And some respectable Yorkshire family might have been disgraced by their son being taken in, by the attraction of a pretty face, to marry a nobody."

Wemmersley looked with an ironical smile towards Arthur, to ascertain whether he felt this "unkindest cut of all;" but Arthur, with

an unblushing brow, was gazing affectionately upon Marian.

"And has Mr. Lomax actually made his proposals?" inquired Mrs. Arthur Armytage, not hearing or not heeding the taunt.

"You will have an opportunity of making the inquiry yourself to-morrow, at Spalding Court," said Wemmersley. "Lord Wyndham, either to annoy me, or meaning to make a butt of *him*, has actually invited him to join your party."

"Delightful!—A butt is always such an acquisition!"

"But *you* are not going to Spalding Court till the 10th?" observed Mrs. Armytage, compassionating the bad taste of the remark.

"Oh! yes,—we are going to-morrow."

"You are mistaken; the invitation was for the 10th."

"But we have altered our arrangements," interposed Arthur. "Greta and his friends

are to dine there on the 9th; and the Duchess made Marian promise last night to anticipate our visit."

"Quite impossible!" said Mrs. Armytage coolly. "I have a dinner party at Holywell on the 9th."

"You never mentioned it to me; or I should not have engaged myself to the Duchess," replied her son.

"You have only to write and put off the engagement."

"I wish it were in my power. Greta, Dumbarton and Edward Brereton are invited expressly to meet us, and were present when we accepted the Duchess's proposals."

"Lord Greta and Lord Edward Brereton are doubtless personages of very vast importance," said the Lady of Holywell. "My guests are simply your old friend Dr. Grant,—who showed you the attention of returning from the lakes a week before his time, in order to be present at the ball last night,"—(Arthur

did not think it necessary to acquaint his mother that the good Doctor's precipitate return had been produced by his hope of being in time to persuade her to adjourn her entertainment to the Blue Boar;) "and my own earliest acquaintances—the Maranham family——"

"*Do* write to the Duchess and defer our visit till the 10th," whispered Marian to her husband.

"Besides your father's friends, from Greta Castle," added Mrs. Armytage: and Marian hardened her heart, and said no more.

"I am extremely sorry the misunderstanding should have occurred," said Arthur resolutely; "and will fully explain it to our friends. But not having been apprized of your plans, I had no reason to suspect any engagement at home. It is impossible for people to act in concert where a mutual understanding does not subsist."

"I scarcely considered it necessary to hold a family council previously to inviting my

friends to dine with me," said Mrs. Armytage, stoutly.

"Nor I to request permission, ere I engaged myself to pass a week with the Duke of Spalding," retorted Arthur.

Sophia trembled, and Wemmersley was enchanted. He never before witnessed anything so nearly resembling a dispute between the mother and son.

"I fear it would be impossible for us to get off," interposed Marian. "The Duchess has so completely set her heart on having us of the party."

"The Duchess!" reiterated Mrs. Armytage, with a tone of sovereign contempt. "The Duchess,—to whom, from both of you, so vast a debt of respect and gratitude is owing!"

The word "gratitude" stung Arthur to the quick. He felt that, with all his faults, he had not shown himself ungrateful. His heart swelled within him.

"Wemmersley! will you give me your opi-

nion of my new setter?" said he, rising, on any pretext, to quit the room.

And while the excited visitor hurried through his "good mornings" and good byes," Arthur Armytage made his way across the hall towards the stables,—he knew not whither;—cursing between his teeth the miserable subjection in which he lived,—the still more painful punctilio by which he was bound to its endurance.

CHAPTER X.

Such the gay splendour, the luxurious state
Of Caliphs old, who, on the Tigris' shore,
In mighty Bagdat, populous and great,
Held their bright court where was of ladies store,
And verse, love, music, still the garland wore.
When sleep was coy, the bard in waiting there
Cheer'd the deep midnight with the muses' lore;
Composing music bade his dreams be fair,
And music lent new gladness to the morning air.

THOMSON.

THE family seat of the Duke of Spalding was one of those majestic country mansions in which England so excusably prides herself, as rivalling in magnificence the palaces of other kingdoms, and far surpassing them in distribution, completeness, order, elegance, and refinement. Situated in that most picturesque district of Yorkshire which terminates in the Caves of Craven, and the Seams of Malham

and Goodale, the park of Spalding Court was bounded to the north by a massive ridge of rocks, and opened westward towards a beautiful mere and extensive range of woodlands; nor had even the experimental vagaries of the Duchess divested it of those noble specimens of ancient timber which serve as our national attestation that, for the last eight hundred years, the bosom of our country has remained unscarred by the hoofs of an invading army.

The mansion was princely; a quadrangle, dating from the august reign of Elizabeth, and having borrowed improvements, without being disfigured by innovations, from the progress of succeeding ages. The household, too, was of corresponding dignity, and excellently trained; a circumstance the more remarkable, considering the restless pains taken by the Duchess in its management. No one, in fact, ever passed a week at Spalding Court, without admitting it to be one of the pleasantest and best-regulated houses in the kingdom.

The Duchess was so far superior in worldly wisdom to Mrs. Armytage, that she *did* admit the influence of her children in her domestic arrangements. Aware that even the most fashionable people must grow *old*-fashioned, unless they condescend to march with the times, she was glad to re-juvenize with her sons and daughters, and learn from them the details of those artificial wants and necessities which the march of frivolity creates, from year to year, for the impoverishment of the rich and the enrichment of the poor. While the Duke kept on the passive and noiseless tenour of his way, having "forgot himself," if not "to stone," certainly to stucco,—the Marquis of Downham and Lord Leicester were admitted to legislate the affairs of the table;—Lord Wyndham, when in England, had a vote in the stable and carriage department; while the two girls took upon themselves a share in the cabinet-council of the drawing-room—the invitations, the fêtes, the order and disorder of the

day. Not that the Duchess ever ceased to act upon her axiom, *l'état c'est moi;* but, like other potentates, she *took* the opinion of her cabinet-council, and, when it suited her, kept her own. She did not, for instance, give ear to the animadversions of her family on her friends, tools, or dependents, nor allow them to interfere with her antipathies. Neither sons nor daughters could have inspired her with charitable feelings towards Mrs. Armytage, nor contemptuous ones towards those easy-as-a-glove obsequients,—the much-enduring Wemmersleys of Mill Hill.

Such was the house and such the people towards whom Arthur and his wife made their way on the fatal 8th of August, through a lovely country and lovely weather; secretly rejoicing at their release from the fretful formalities of Holywell, cheered by the consciousness of being again together, unwatched by discontented eyes, and welcomed into pleasant society for the sake of their own powers of

pleasing. Marian found, on her arrival, her rooms so considerately chosen, that she could not for a moment apprehend that her child would be troublesome or in the way:—they were magnificently lodged, but established with their own servants about them. In a moment she felt at home. Shy as she was, there was something in the independent habits of Spalding Court calculated to put her instantly at ease.

She was already acquainted with the family, with the exception of the Duke (who was seen only at meals, and then seen only as a handsome, high-bred, reserved man; the picture of a picture of "a Man of Quality," by Kneller or Reynolds) and of his eldest son, the Marquis of Downham. But the character of the son, as one of the types of the times, merits closer investigation than that of the father.

Singularly gifted by nature with those extrinsic attractions which, though they some-

times tend to the promotion of the obscure, almost invariably serve to depreciate the great, Lord Downham had from babyhood been cited for the mere distinction of his beauty; had been modelled, painted, exhibited, engraved—quizzed for his prettiness as a schoolboy, and adored as an adolescent. He had made artists rich, tailors fashionable, and ladies mad, bad, and indifferent; too handsome to study, too handsome to seek popularity, too handsome to marry a wife. But there comes a trying hour in the career of every Adonis; an hour which washballs, pommades, and Gowland's lotion may retard, but cannot annihilate; an hour when the chestnut or raven curls wax thin or grizzly—when the cheek grows lank, the eye dim, and crows'-feet and wrinkles usurp the world-worn face. Of this, his Lordship felt himself on the verge. Late hours and claret had accelerated the ravages of time; and now, the Marquis was vibrating in a state of exqui-

site uncertainty. A beauty no longer,—how was he next to distinguish himself from the vulgar herd of Lords and Commons?

In these times, the modes are numberless of courting notoriety. He might compose an opera, and inflict his own symphonies on the endurance of the Ancient Concerts. He might ascend the heights of Mont Blanc, or Topocatepetl, at the cost of a guide or so, and annuities to the widows. He might daub landscapes for Somerset-House,—cut up society into shreds in weekly caricatures; — might elope with a Bishop's widow,—or an Infanta of Portugal. But in all this, the Marquis felt that he should be at best but an ignoble imitator of noble originals. He knew that in political life it was vain for him to seek distinction;—his party was overflowing with able and ambitious men. What if he were to turn Radical, and attempt to revolutionize the country? No!—independently of the personal sacrifices indispensable to such a recantation,

even that plan wanted originality. Others had still been beforehand with him. At best he could only hope to figure as Mirabeau III.

His choice was still undetermined; and this, for the first time in his days, rendered the superannuated Cupid a very amusing companion. Every new celebrity—(and in London how rapidly do the demigods of fame succeed each other on the altar of publicity!)—tempted him for a moment. The North Pole came into fashion;—and he thought of fitting out a trebly-cased yacht for a campaign against the walrusses. Timbuctoo and the lost tribes of Israel excited the speculations of the ignorant-erudite; and the Marquis pondered upon the eligibility of assuming a Mesopotamian costume, and pilgrimizing through the desarts. The cold scheme lasted him one hot summer; the torrid project kept him warm during the next hard winter. But although thinking of the frosty Caucasus enabled him to endure the fervours of Brighton in the

dog-days, it did not beguile him into so much as crossing the Marine Parade towards the completion of the adventure. The Mazurka soon came into fashion; and the success of its exotic professors inspired him with the notion of becoming the dancing idol of the day. Then followed the theatricals at Bridgewater-House; and nothing less would satisfy him than to out-Kean poor Kean! But why enumerate the catalogue of his erratic schemes? He was, as it has been already observed, still undecided;—not *une ambition manquée,* but *une ambition ambigue.*

The girls, Marian had, on a slight acquaintance, already pronounced to be charming, lively, natural, enthusiastic creatures; without suspecting that Lady Amabel's *naïveté* was the most studied of all her accomplishments; Lady Honoria's enthusiasm a clever cold-blooded speculation. By assuming at fitting moments the ecstacies of some *engouement de bon ton,* such as for Pasta's singing, or Cha-

lon's portraits—or even for "the fine mind of that intellectual creature Lady So-and-so,"—or "the superhuman eloquence of dear Lord Thunderam's last speech,"—a girl of very ordinary faculties contrived to pass for a critic and a judge. It all did very well in their own set. Lady Amabel was established as a sayer of odd things, and Lady Honoria of clever ones. Even wiser people were sometimes taken in;—artists seduced by the medium of their vanity into believing their talents *really* appreciated; or very young philosophers, who saw in the bright eyes and coral lips of the pretty Spaldings the guarantee of any excellence they might be pleased to assume,—applauded to the echo.

"I am so enchanted you are come!" said Lady Amabel, dragging rather than leading Marian to a seat in the boudoir, after having dispatched Arthur to the archery-ground, in search of her brothers,—"I remained at home in case you should arrive early;" (adding nothing of

her expectations of the arrival of the Greta Castle party.) "Mamma and the rest are gone to a sort of pic-nic at Malham Cove; to gather wild auriculas, rave about the beauties of Wordsworth, and eat fried perch from Malham Water. We have got a charming little coterie; Chronos, the poet;—Lady Emily Maclaren, the famous politician, you know, (a great ally, by the way, of mamma's,) who was a sort of ex-whipper-in to our party when we were in office,—and her husband, I conclude, though I have neither seen nor heard him since they arrived,—nobody plays dumbness to such perfection. Then there is the Duke of Wetherby, whom mamma has been trying to catch for Honoria, these three years. Of him I shall say nothing lest he should ever become my brother-in-law; and for the same reason I leave out papa's sister Lady Marscourt, and our demure little cousin Pen,—who has been out these nine years and still holds to a muslin frock, coral necklace, and potations, pottle-deep, of milk

and water. Besides these, we expect to-morrow a most amusing savage whom we lately caught in your neighbourhood——"

"Mr. Leonidas Lomax?"

"Exactly; who, I believe, was squatting in a wigwam in a cub's skin, or *blanket*, some half-dozen years ago, and now pretends to civilization, and swears that his broad-cloth does not sit uneasily on his shoulders. Poor Downham will be so disappointed!—We have prepared him to expect one of the "half-horse, half-alligator, with a touch of the earthquake" species;—and he has primed himself with all sorts of Yankeeisms to meet the monster; when, lo!—the wretch, instead of sitting with his legs on the table, and doing all the amusing things described by Mrs. Trollope, will talk of nothing but balls at the Tuileries,—dinners at the Café de Paris;—and "miladys" us all round, like a country footman."

Marian felt a little frightened. Amid this waste of satire, she thought it little likely her

own faults and failings could escape; but Lady Amabel, with whom the art of living in the world almost supplied the place of discernment, discovered, perhaps, that she had gone too far.

"But there is nothing new," she continued, "in discovering curiosities of this description in our country neighbourhood. *Il n'en manque jamais en province,* as my brother Wyndham says. The wonder, to *us,* is to find a dear little country neighbour, like yourself, in whom we can hope to make a friend. If it had not been for Wyn, we should never have become acquainted with you; for Holywell is such a formal affair, that the idea of a mere morning visit there gives mamma a fit of the ague. Miss Armytage appears to be a good kind of well-meaning girl; but she is so delicate in health, and so kept down by her mother, that there is no knowing what to say or do with her. I often wonder that the trees dare grow

at Holywell, for fear they should grow the wrong way for pleasing Mrs. Armytage."

Marian, with all her want of tact, was wise enough to forbear adding a word in discommendation of her husband's mother; but it really *did* give her pleasure to hear any one presuming to utter such truths respecting her imperial majesty. She contented herself with observing, in extenuation—"If you would give yourself the trouble to talk to Sophia, I am persuaded you would like her."

"No!—she is the bosom friend of Lady Laura Greta, *our* moral antipathy. Some one advised mamma to make up a match with her for my brother Leicester, and so secure Lord Rotherham's influence for his election; but Leicester declared he would as soon marry the Speaker in petticoats! Don't you think her odious?"

"More so than any one I ever saw!" said Marian, with perfect sincerity.

"There 's a dear little creature!" cried Lady Amabel, seizing her hand. "I knew you would be such an acquisition to us—I knew we should find you so different from all those formal Armytages! Hark!—Do you hear that flute? I forgot to enumerate, among our list of people, Monsieur de Cléramel. Do you happen to know Monsieur de Cléramel, or rather Monsieur de Cléramel's flute?—No?—You are very lucky! He is the finest performer in Europe, and the greatest *fat*—beats Tulou and Alfred D.,—and for the last two years has been asked everywhere as a lion! But on a sudden the man grew fine—*would* play and would *not* play—in short, made himself a bore. So now he has been invited to half-a-dozen country-houses, W— Abbey, B— Castle, and several more; and we have entered into a conspiracy to drop all mention of the flute. The poor soul, who is dying to show off, would give his right hand to be asked to play; but we are inexorable:—so poor Cléramel is obliged to

stay at home whenever a party of pleasure is going on, that he may keep himself in practice without being overheard. Ah!—He has stopped!—Depend on it the carriages are in sight."

And, as she predicted, within a few minutes the whole party entered the adjoining library; and Mrs. Armytage was warmly welcomed and kindly presented to Lady Marscourt and Lady Emily. Chronos, with a pretty little ready-made, bright and shining enamelled compliment in his mouth, solicited the same honour; the Duke bowed lower than he was apt to do to those not belonging to his immediate set; and Marian was soon surrounded with acquaintances, and almost at her ease.

CHAPTER XI.

Come on, then, Satire, general, unconfined,
Spread thy broad wing, and souse on all the kind.
I fain would please you, if I knew with what—
Tell me which name is lawful game, which not.
Must great offenders, once escaped the crown,
Like royal harts, be never more run down?
Admit your law to spare the knight requires,
As beasts of nature may we hunt the squires?

POPE.

"How wrong I am even to set foot in Spalding Court," cried Lord Greta to his friend Armytage, usurping a place in the arm-chair of Arthur's dressing-room when they all retired for the night:—"the sight of these hollow, frivolous people puts me on such wickedly good terms with myself for a whole month afterwards."

"After all, they are entertaining enough," replied Arthur, who had been passing an un-

usually agreeable evening. "Pleasant, but wrong."

"Yes!—And so are dancing-dogs, if one had patience and leisure to admire their antics."

"*I*, unfortunately, have leisure for anything," said Arthur.

"A double reason for making me regret to see you in the way of being attracted by these foolish people. I have been puzzling myself, for three days past, to find out the Duchess's motive for inviting you here. Don't be affronted—I mean no offence to your dignity. I know that *I* am asked on the remote chance of my falling in love with one of the daughters, just as they were civil to my mother a few months ago, by way of making up to Laura for that vivacious member of the community, Lord Leicester. But *you* are married."

"And if single, not very likely to attract the manœuvres of a match-maker," said Arthur despondingly.

"What, then, can they want of you?" continued Lord Greta. "The pleasure of your society?—By no means! The Duchess would infinitely prefer, and can at all times command, any one of the fifty dining-out men about town, who travel, during the sporting season, from house to house, with their little note-books of impromptu clevernesses in their portmanteaux. I wish I could make it out! I shall hardly like to leave you in Yorkshire, Arthur, while I am on the Moors, exposed to all the fascination of these glistening reptiles!"

"Fie, fie!—You use hard words."

"Applied to hard natures! I look upon such a woman as the Duchess as a public pest! A better-meaning person than the Duke of Spalding does not exist—full of integrity and honest feeling; and such a man has been lost to himself and the country, from being wrecked in marriage against an iceberg broke loose—a woman without principle or feeling. Any man inclined to commit matrimony on a short

acquaintance, ought to look upon the Duke of Spalding, and take warning!"

"But, my dear fellow, *I* am in no danger on that score. You need not be afraid of her Grace engaging *me* to one of her daughters!"

"No—but I may suspect her of an intention of engaging you to one of her party. You are known to be a young member—a lukewarm politician. You are accused, and (pardon me) with some cause, of trifling away your life as chance impels you. Otherwise, that Machiavel in petticoats, Lady Emily Maclaren, would not have ventured to make so bold a cast for you as she made to-night. Had she intended to entangle a more experienced adversary, she would have commenced her operations craftily—remotely—secretly; but her rashness will be your redemption. Even *you*, who are too idle to open both your eyes to aid you in walking through the world, cannot but perceive, with one, that her Ladyship's object is your voice and vote."

"Indeed, I perceive no such thing," said Arthur, laughing, but nettled. "*You* budding statesmen, my dear Greta, whose first beard sprouted white, and whose precocious wisdom is to enable England to weather the storm, fancy, like the little mole in the fable, that you hear the sound of ten thousand water-mills, where mill-stream there is none. I make no boast of my political wisdom; yet, upon my life, I suspect I have that which is better to be depended upon. Mine are family politics, which I can no more change than my family name. Yours, on the contrary, are open to the influence of argument. *Your* views might be changed by the smiles or the eloquence of a Lady Emily Maclaren—I should simply reply to them,—

My name is Armytage!
On Yorkshire wolds my mother feeds her flock,
Whose constant care is to increase her votes,
And keep her only son, myself, a Whig!"

"If you have nothing more convincing to urge in your own defence, better join our

party to the Moors, and keep yourself out of the way of mischief."

"Join your party?—I wish I could!—But I have married a wife, you know; and therefore I——"

"Nonsense!—Do you suppose that when I marry, I shall give up grouse-shooting?"

"No!—Because *you* will have the means of leaving your wife in a happy home of her own, while I must abandon mine to the caprices of a person far from favourably disposed towards her."

"Perhaps you are right," said Greta, remembering on how many occasions he had been pained by the deportment of Mrs. Armytage, even towards her own faultless daughter: "yet I am not the more reconciled to leaving you in the midst of a set of *intriguantes*."

"No great mischief can be done in a week; and even Lady Emily's audacity would scarcely pursue the attack amidst the sober formalities of Holywell."

"*Ne gagez pas!*"

"At all events, I shall be too busy to be vulnerable."

"Busy with what?—Pheasant-shooting?"

"No!—I have more rational occupation in view; to which, as you appear to be in Thersites' vein, I will not now call your attention."

"Do, pray!—I am quite serious now," said Lord Greta, earnestly.

"Well, then, I am beginning to be as tired of my good-for-nothingness as *you* can be of seeing me good for nothing—I want an object in life, or strength of mind to exist without one. I feel that I ought to improve myself—that, some day or other, more will be required of me than I am capable of rendering. *You* were studying at Eton, at Oxford, when I was driving tandems; and as I did not choose to be a schoolboy in my days of schoolboyism, I must become one now, when I ought to be fulfilling the duties of a man.—It is not too late. My excellent friend Grant (who will not laugh

at me, as you are probably dying to do) has often urged me to this, and will help me, without making a boast or a bore of his assistance."

"Laugh at you?" said Lord Greta feelingly. "Laugh at *me*, if you like, for having been afraid of a coquette such as Lady Emily, while your plans were so differently directed. You have set my mind at ease. And now, good night; or your wife, with all her good-nature, will tear her papillotes for spite at being kept awake by my grumbling."

The following day shone brilliantly upon Spalding Court. The diversion originally offered as a temptation to Lord Greta and his friends, of a trolling party on the lake, although somewhat deteriorated to the sportsmen by the brilliancy of the weather, derived new attractions when, in the course of the afternoon, the skiff reserved for the use of the ladies was seen scudding towards the point of the shore along which the gallant anglers were

dispersed,—"youth at the prow" and Lord Wyndham Spalding "at the helm."

One or two, among whom were Arthur and his friend, tired of indifferent sport, begged to be admitted to the sailing party; and after sufficient enjoyment of a refreshing breeze adding new attractions to the beautiful and even majestic scenery around, they anchored on a well-wooded islet, where the Duchess, in a fit of Walter-Scottish enthusiasm, had, some years before, erected a "bower" on the model of the exiled Douglas's retreat at Loch Katrine.

"It was a lodge of ample size,
But strange of structure and device;
Of such materials as around
The workman's hand had readiest found.
Lopp'd of their boughs, their hoar trunks bared,
And by the hatchet rudely squared,
To give the walls their destined height,
The sturdy oak and ash unite;
While moss and clay and leaves combined
To fence each crevice from the wind.
The lighter pine-trees, overhead,
Their slender length for rafters spread,

And wither'd heath and rushes dry
Supplied a russet canopy.
Due westward, fronting to the green,
A rural portico was seen,
Aloft on native pillars borne
Of mountain fir with bark unshorn."

Neither Lady of the Lake, nor stalwart Baron, however, was visible on the present occasion; but, in their stead, a *maître d'hôtel* and two prosaic commonplace standard-footmen, presiding over a collation which, by her Grace's orders, had been considerately transported to the spot; and in lieu of the clang of falling armour, the clattering of knives and forks, and detonating corks of Ay and Sillery, were shortly heard upon the spot. Lady Marscourt, always alive to occasions for bringing forward the modest merits of simplicity in a muslin frock, had devised in her turn a surprise for the party, purporting to be agreeable, by stationing her dear Penelope in the portico to delight them with the appropriate strain of "Huntsman, rest!"—and

"While to her lips, in measured frame,
The minstrel verse spontaneous came,"

the French horns, which at a distance had accompanied the party, stationed among the high-waving fern and golden broom,

——"*unseen*,
Fill'd up the symphonies between."

To Marian, all this had the charm of enchantment. *Her* delicate senses had not been from infancy satiated, like those of most of her present companions, by sights and sounds of beauty. The limited and city-bounded sphere of her enjoyments had left her feelings free for every glorious impression derivable from contemplation of the beauties of Nature; and in a scene so lovely, with a cheerful party of conciliatory friends, including Arthur among the number, she began to feel herself in a new and happier world. Lady Emily Maclaren insisted on hearing from Winsome Wyn one of those lively French *Chansons de Société*, for giving point to the

finesses of which, the gay Parisian was so celebrated; and as Monsieur de Cléramel was, as usual, at home *tête-à-tête* with his flute, (styled by the Spaldings his "*Flauto Tragico,*") no one's vanity was wounded; and the little *fête* went off as buoyantly as if

"Love and all the world were young."

More sailing, a last visit to Lord Edward, and his brothers of the angle, passed away the time till the cool of the evening; when the gong was heard on the lawn, warning the stragglers of the party home to prepare for dinner; — and at dinner new guests, with the arrival of Lord Leicester from town, served to vary the scene of the preceding day.

"And who did you leave in London?" inquired Lady Emily of the dandy passive, whose grave countenance was bent over his soup plate as steadily as that of Narcissus over his stream.

"Nobody!" was the taciturn reply.

"And what was Nobody doing to amuse itself?" she persisted.

"Nothing!"

"Going, of course, *no where,* eh?—my dear fellow!" inquired Lord Edward Brereton, who was too light-hearted to be paralysed, even by the inanity of an Ineffable.

"Where *should* people go in August, unless to the Moors?" said young Dumbarton, as earnestly as if really seeking information.

"When I quitted town," observed Lord Greta, "there appeared to be a very pleasant society remaining; and as to *going,* I never saw a more locomotive set! Every day some party to Richmond, Norwood, Kew Wood."

"Yes! I remember hearing several of our club allude to persecutions of that kind they had escaped. The Dowager Duchess, for instance, had a serious exploring *partie de campagne* to the cemetery at Kensal Green," said Lord Leicester.

"One of the most beautiful spots in the environs of London," said Lord Greta, unsilenced by his impertinence.

"And I was assured that Lady Baynard and her noisy daughters deluded several unguarded individuals into a tadpole dinner at Blackwall."

"I was there," resumed his lordship. "A remarkably pleasant set;—and an admirable fish-dinner, arranged by the web-footed *chef* of the Dutch ambassador."

"Ah!—indeed!—*That* must have been worth tasting? *Du cabillot,* of course not *au bleu,* (as at the *Rocher*) but *à l'Orange;* and oceans of water *Zuije,* enough to cover the Doggerbank—eh? Greta!—Could you not give our people a hint for rendering palatable some of those splendid *brochets* which you were so fortunate as to land this morning?" cried Lord Wyndham.

"I am as bad a cook as fisherman," replied

Lord Greta;—"and a worse critic than either. I only know that I found the Baynard's party the pleasantest of the season."

"I fancy you Foreign Officials, as well as we Life-Guardsmen, grow accustomed to swallowing the dregs of the season," said Lord Edward, laughing. "I swear I saw, just before I left town, some of our fellows flirting into the same window of the same carriage, crawling along the same line of the same ring, with the same horses at the same pace, that I had watched them at the same hour at the same fun, every day from the close of the hunting season;—and, I suspect, saying precisely the same sweet things,—for they were received with precisely the same sweet smile as for five months past!"

"What is there but sameness in your London routine!" cried Lord Wyndham. "*C'est d'une monotonie à faire gêler le Vésuve!* Now, at Paris, we have, for all seasons and their change, (ay!—even for all *demi-saisons,*) a variation of *promenades.*"

"Reason good!" answered Lady Emily. "*You*, who never stir two leagues from the capital,—who take the waters of Enghien by way of Spa,—find your Swiss valleys at Montmorency,—hunt and shoot in the forests of Vincennes, Versailles, or St. Germain's,—and make even your Newmarket in the Champs de Mars, and your steeple chaces along the avenues of the Bois de Boulogne,—you are forced to find mountains in mole-hills, and search for the picturesque in the *banlieue*."

"Respect our motives for remaining stationary, my dear Lady Emily,—respect our motives," replied Wyndham, a little piqued, and well aware of the factitious nature of a considerable portion of the little beauty's charms. "*We* fix ourselves at Paris, because the lovely creatures who render its coteries so attractive, *cannot* travel. The better half of a *Parisienne* lives in her *cartons*, and in *cartons* too numerous for even the most accommodating of Hobson's travelling carriages. The

gown, the cap, the *béret,* the hat, the turban, might perhaps be transported; and all the glories of Mesdames Oudot and Beaudrant render some obscure château a Paradise of coquettes. But still the dear creature dares not quit her coëffeur, her dentist,—the *artistes* who, *par abonnement,* preside over the paring of her nails and the extraction of every gray hair. The rumpling of a dress, the discomposure of a feather in her *tambour,* distracts her; so that, in order to keep her temper and her lover, she wisely plants herself in her delicious hotel *entre cour et jardin,* for at least ten months of the twelve;—and we, of necessity, remain at her feet."

"It appeared to me," added Arthur Armytage, not understanding his friend's malicious motives for misrepresentation, "that Paris was quite as much deserted at the close of the summer, as London:—the heat, the glare and fine dust of the unwatered roads of its plaster soil, rendering it far more insupportable. I

admit that the country life of the Parisians is merely the villa life of our *beau-monde;* and *their* villa life is *pour tout potage.* They content themselves with remaining within a drive of the Opera; and care not to go farther, at the risk of faring worse."

"Why, who *could* fix his residence in that most desolate and solitary of barns, a comfortless French château!" cried Lord Greta. "The habits of the nation are distinctly averse from country domestication; and, for the last century, it has been the policy of its rulers to concentrate the twin aristocracy of birth and wealth in the metropolis; just as it is the wisdom of ours, to promote their dissemination over the face of the kingdom. The peers of France, and even its lower Chamber, know little more of the country they govern than can be learned from a post-map; while our English legislature, whether hereditary or elective, find their own interest in watching over and promoting the improvements of even

the remotest county,—the most obscure parish;—the mass is held together by the closest and most intermingled series of personal ties."

The Duke of Wetherby, and the automaton generally understood to be Mr. Maclaren, assumed a polite look of conviction, and bowed assent. The Duke of Spalding secretly wondered that a discreet young man should throw away so much wisdom at such a table as *his*. The Duchess whispered something audibly to Lady Marscourt about "first-rate talent—most rising young man of the day,"—and Lady Amabel made mouths across the table at Lord Edward Brereton. Not one of them thought or cared for Monsieur de Cléramel's feelings. But their egotism was of small importance. Little Simplicity in a muslin frock, in order to secure them from mortification, had been engrossing the flute-player in unintermitting argumentation on the immorality of Ancelot's dramas and the novels of Monsieur de Balzac!

"When do you return to this beloved Paris? and will you undertake a commission for me?" inquired Lady Emily, in a peacemaking tone, of Lord Wyndham.

"The first *coup d'archet* of the *Italiens* is always my signal for setting up my tent in the Rue de Provence," he replied. "I shall quit Yorkshire immediately after Doncaster. Till then, I am here, and at your commands."

"Better come with us to the Moors," cried Lord Edward, who, for noise and movement sake, would willingly have included the whole Travellers' Club in his party. "Now Leicester is arrived, you are no longer wanted at home."

"Lord Leicester is so great an acquisition!" ejaculated Lady Emily. But the dandy passive heeded her not. He was mincing a chili into his lobster salad.

"I understand our Castle of Glenvarloch is as vast and rambling as a Languedoc *château*," said Lord Greta. "We have room

even for your Italian valet, my dear Wyndham, who is by far the greatest man of my acquaintance."

"Tempt not a falling man too far!" exclaimed his Lordship aloud; adding, in a low voice, "Swear you can't do without me—swear it—and loud enough to wake his Grace, asleep yonder at the head of the table."

"At all events, manage it for the first fortnight," said Lord Greta, following his injunctions; "and Armytage, who has already half a mind to play truant, will bear you company and return with you, by the time the sport flags and birds grow scarce. What say you, Arthur?—or rather," addressing Marian, "what say *you?*"

"That I think it an excellent scheme," answered she, blushing at the sound of her own voice, but approving any plan tending to remove her husband from Greta Castle.

"Spoken like a wise wife!" muttered the Duke of Spalding in an inaudible voice, and

not half so much asleep as (to save himself trouble) he chose to appear.

"And *I*," cried the Duchess, "give it my full sanction" (which no one had asked), "on condition that Mr. Armytage leaves us his wife in pledge, as a hostage for Wyndham's return at the appointed time. Indeed, my dear Mrs. Armytage, you *must* delight us with your company during his absence. We cannot think of parting with you so soon; for it seems these wild-geese take wing for the North to-morrow night. Say yes, and make my girls perfectly happy?"

Marian was too much embarrassed to say anything, when she saw the eyes of the whole party fixed upon her. But every one answered in her name, that "Oh! yes—she certainly would, could, should, and must remain at Spalding Court till the return of Mr. Armytage." And Marian was too much in the habit of being answered for by others, to venture denial. Even if at that moment she had

recollected Mrs. Armytage and Holywell, she would not have presumed to raise objections.

"By the way, what has become of Chronos? How could we be so forgetful as to sit down to dinner without Mr. Chronos!" cried the Duchess, addressing her daughters. "I suppose no additional cover was laid for Leicester; and as I did not see a vacant chair, I missed no one."

"We must have left him on the island," said Lady Amabel.

"I saw him sitting on the stump of a tree, contemplating the beauties of the setting sun," added Lady Honoria. "He looked quite a picture, like some dear delightful old minstrel—Gray's Bard, or Homer, without their beards."

"He will be eaten alive by the water-rats!" said Lord Leicester, calmly. "When the boatman used to reside on the island, he lost a child a year."

"Absurd!" said the Duchess, angrily.—

"Lamarre!"—(addressing the groom of the chambers) "*Sait-on ce qui est devenu Monsieur Chronos?*"

"*Monsieur s'est fait servir un poulet au blanc, dans son appartemeut, Madame la Duchesse,*" replied the spruce valet-de-chambre. "*Il m'a fait prévenir qu'il ne descend plus aujourd'hui.*"

"Then he is composing!" cried Lady Emily. "That is his way. When the Pythonic fit is upon him, he shuts himself up, door within door, padlock upon padlock, lest any one should witness his contortions; takes green tea and æther, and has his room fumigated with Godfrey's salts."

"For fear of infection?"

"To support exhausted nature. To-morrow at breakfast, my dear Duchess, your album will have to boast 'seven stanzas written by a bore,' on your island and its fair islanders."

"Oh! how very delightful!" cried Lady Honoria. "The Spalding album wanted only that to be perfect! We have got something

from every modern poet worth having. Lord Albert, Lord Francis, Lord C., Lord D., Lord E., Sir William S.,—all the galaxy of the Keepsake. The smallest possible stanza from Mr. Chronos will be a perfect gem! Penelope! you and your serenade will be immortalized!"

"I am sure I sincerely hope not!" said Lady Marscourt, gravely. "It would distress the poor girl to death to be immortalized—probably to be added to some future edition of Mr. Chronos's works, and be stuck up in every library window."

"You would not like to be stuck up, should you, Pen?" inquired Lady Amabel of her cousin;—but the young lady in the coral necklace was not quite young enough to answer such a question.

"I think it very impertinent in people to put persons into their books!" said Lady Marscourt crabbedly.

"*Persons* ought certainly to monopolize the

right of satirizing *people*," said Lord Greta; "and with an especial reserve for privilege of peerage."

"But our friend Chronos is more than a person,—quite a personage;" observed Lady Emily.

Already the Duchess, seeing her sister-in-law's colour and choler rising, had given the signal for quitting the dining-room;—and the gentlemen were now left to digest their Highland plans, without the dread of wives or mothers before their eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

Every company is differently circumstanced and has its peculiar cant and jargon; which may give occasion to wit and mirth within that circle, but would seem flat and insipid in any other.

CHESTERFIELD.

MARIAN's coincidence was very easily confirmed, when she was informed by her husband that Lord Greta and his friends having decided to set off from Greta Castle the following night, he had agreed to follow with Lord Wyndham, the morning ensuing. "You, dearest, and the child will remain here," he added, "during the fortnight of my absence. I shall not write to Holywell;—my mother would only raise some absurd objection. But on the day previous to that at present fixed for your return, send a little note to Sophia, explaining the affair. You will be happier

with the Spaldings than at home. They are very fond of you, Marian;—they do you justice. I shall be quite satisfied to know that you are passing your time agreeably and among such kind friends. I really begin to like the family better than I used. I fancy my mother prejudiced me unnecessarily against them."

And the next day, in pursuance of their plan of campaign, the Greta party took an early departure from Spalding Court; and soon afterwards, at least three hours earlier than he was expected, and early enough to discompose every conventional form of comings and goings established by the Duchess in her little dominions, Mr. Leonidas Lomax made his appearance. He could not bear to lose an hour of the day fixed for his *début* on the scene of aristocratic life.

"Who on earth is the strange man I found just now in the library?" cried Lady Emily Maclaren, throwing herself out of breath on a chair in the Duchess's morning-room. "A

creature with long flat feet, and long straight arms, that holds its hat by its side like a footman waiting for an answer to a message,—and dressed in all the exaggerated finery of the *Journal des Modes?* It must be some monster that Lord Downham has picked up at Harrogate and sent here to amuse us."

"Who *can* it be?" cried Lady Amabel. "Aunt Marscourt!—rely upon it, it is the Editor of a fashionable Annual, come to beg for Mr. Chronos's stanzas upon poor Penelope."

"Did he make any inquiry of you, Lady Emily?" gravely demanded Lady Marscourt.

"No!—he only stared me out of countenance, and bowed me out of the room."

"It can be nobody but that Yankee uncle of Mr. Wemmersley's," cried Lady Honoria; "that dear, amusing, out-of-the-way creature, with the dyed eyebrows and rose-coloured waistcoat. What an hour for a man to arrive!"

"He must find his own amusements till din-

ner," said the Duchess, haughtily. "My sons undertake the men staying in the house during the morning;—and I fancy they are all dispersed for the day."

And thus poor Lomax, who had "calculated" on passing a happy morning, Corydonizing among the ladies, (ladies who were not only ladies, but ladyships!) found himself consigned to no livelier society than the marble busts of Demosthenes and Cicero,—Plato and Seneca. And not only the Duchess, but the fates seemed to be against him. After he had passed an uneasy hour in an easy chair, bolt upright, lest he should derange the set of his cravat, or the curve of his guard-chain, Chronos, MS. in hand, entered the room, to look in the dictionary for a rhyme to "furze;"—when Leonidas, seeing something ducal in everything at Spalding Court, addressed him "much as a farmer would a lord,"—"your Grace;" and inquired with assiduous politeness after the Duchess and their young ladyships.

Now, although Lomax would have found himself in the seventh Heaven to be mistaken for so illustrious a personage as the Duke of Spalding, it was not so with Chronos. Chronos looked upon Chronos as more distinguished in his nature than a prince of the blood; and, deciding that the dunce who knew him not must be himself unknown, deigned no explanation, but hastily withdrew; leaving the new-comer to note within his note-book, that Dukes in England are unsightly to the eye, and ungracious to the ear.

Nor could Leonidas have figured to himself that beneath a roof so aristocratic, in a chamber whose groined ceiling was emblazoned with lordly escutcheons, the time could pass so heavily as the solitary hour that ensued; and it was even some relief to him when a plain and somewhat meanly-attired middle-aged domestic entered the room and began to arrange a file of county newspapers on the reading table.

"I say, Mister!" said Leonidas, finding that his audible yawn attracted no notice from the under-butler, (for the man was too inferior in costume to the spruce Monsieur Lamarre who had ushered him in, to be anything but a subordinate,) "I say, Mister, do you think the Duchess knows I am here?"

"I conclude, Sir, you have been announced?" said the butler, eyeing the stranger-guest with a look of suspicion.

"I guess so. But I have been cogitating here these two hours, and not a soul coming within hail but the Duke, your master, who took me up so short that I scarce calculate his Grace understood me to be one of the Duchess's friends and guests."

"Nor I neither!" replied the butler, encouraged by the familiarity of Lomax to indulge in a laugh.

"Short reckonings make long friendships," returned the neglected visitor, producing a sovereign out of a very long purse and very

short pocket, and tossing it to his companion. "Let us understand each other, friend; and now, be so good as go and announce me again to the ladies."

But neither bribe nor announcement served his cause. The Duchess was inexorable. Lomax had the mortification of seeing a barouche-full of waving feathers and gay pelisses drive from the door for a morning airing; and a riding party, consisting of Arthur and his wife, Lord Wyndham, Lady Honoria, and the Duke of Wetherby, pass the windows of the library. But no one came near him. He was deserted even by his friend the butler.

At length, finding himself indisputable monarch of all he surveyed, and tired of the solitude of his sovereignty, off he set, in defiance of his tight boots, to take a walk in the park; and although the somewhat savage character of its scenery suited his transatlantic fancy less in a pleasure ground, than the gracious and ornate cultivation of Holywell, yet comparing

it with his recent experience of his kinsman's contracted lawn at Mill Hill, he was forced to admit that it wanted only a little clearing to be mighty grand.

On his limping back to the house, Monsieur Lamarre deigned to acquaint him that as it was one of the public days at Spalding Court, he would find her Grace before dinner in the long gallery, but not till then. And when, after an elaborate toilet, he quitted the dressing-room appropriated to his use, and traversed the corridors towards the place pointed out, it was some consolation to his wounded feelings to encounter his friend, the neglectful butler, by the way. About to address him in no gentle terms of remonstrance, (for his protégé laughed heartily on perceiving him,) the attention of Leonidas was attracted by something which he "guessed" must bespeak a peculiar privilege of ducal dignity. He had not known before that the domestic servants of knights of the garter were permitted to assume that

badge of chivalry. But they were already at the doors of the gallery; which, being pompously thrown back by the footmen in their state liveries, the butler stood respectfully aside while the name of "Mr. Leonidas Lomax" was audibly announced. No one of the gay throng within came forward to receive him; for the Duchess and her daughters kept their state at the upper end of the gallery. But, to his great amazement, *every* one came forward to greet his companion—*the butler*, who followed him into the room; some bowing deferentially—some cordially shaking hands—but one and all saluting him by the title of Duke of Spalding.

If anything could have increased the mortification of the newly Toryfied citizen on discovering his unaccountable error, it would have been the fact that he had previously tendered his homage to so insignificant a thing as a mere writer of verses—a mere manufacturer of books.

The spectacle before him, too, was eminently calculated to enhance the dignity of a Duke of Spalding in his eyes. Hitherto, Holywell Park had afforded the highest model to his notions of domestic state; he had never guessed that anything so nearly approaching to feudal or royal magnificence existed in commercial England, as the public day of a lord-lieutenant. His feelings were excited by the gaudy liveries, the gay dresses, the splendid furniture. He bowed lower and lower to every one who caught his eye; and would have been quite ready to "milady" even the Duchess's waiting-woman.

In the course of the gay banquets that succeeded, Arthur Armytage was destined to a surprise almost as disagreeable as that experienced by Lomax. The arrival of the Marquis of Downham had operated a change in the family arrangements of the Spaldings. It appeared that there were papers to be signed requiring the aid of Lord Wyndham as heir-

presumptive ; and it was settled among them with as much ease as if the change of persons could make no difference to Arthur, that the apathetic Lord Leicester should replace his lively brother in their tour to the Highlands.

"I have no particular objection to the scheme," said he, when the project was proposed to him. "I like travelling. One never sleeps so well as in an easy carriage,—and as to the moors, although I do not shoot, I shall get my *ecarté* with Dumbarton and Brereton of an evening, and escape the *corvée* of making up the Duke of Spalding's nightly rubber. Tell Armytage I will certainly go."

An objection on Arthur's part seemed out of the question ; and, the following morning, at day-break, a piece of furniture, very little more animated than the chaise-seat, was placed in his *calêche,* and away they bowled along the North Road, leaving Marian half terrified at the idea of being left to her own discretion in a house full of strangers ; and Leonidas Lo-

max dreaming of stars and garters,—as much bemused by the pleasures of lordly life as Christopher Sly the Tapster.

CHAPTER XIV.

When I am froward,
My sullen humour punishes itself.
I'm like a day in March, sometimes o'ercast
With storms, but then the after clearness is
The greater.—The worst is, where I love most
The tempests fall most heavy.

DRYDEN.

MEANWHILE, affairs were proceeding less smoothly at Holywell Park. A ball is an event more easily forgotten by the guests who receive, than by the host who gives the entertainment; and although one of the greatest grievances attendant on such paroxysms of hospitality—long bills to be paid,—was a subject, of all, least important in the eyes of Mrs. Armytage, yet it greatly irritated her feelings to learn from Simmons and the rest, that the Thoroton people were indignant and

resentful, that any portion of her preparations should have been supplied from town; and from Wemmersley, that the Holywell carriage would certainly be pelted if seen to traverse the High Street of the Borough. Every body had been ill-used, either in his own person, or that of a fortieth cousin. "I that voted—I that promised votes,—I that gave a plumper, —I that brought up thirty,—I that spoke,—I that fought,—I that got out of a sick bed!" There was no end to the services which had been rendered to Arthur Armytage;—there was no end to the ingratitude with which they had been repaid!

But the ire of Gumption was the deadliest—implacable as it was silent. It was even said that he had smiled when the misconduct of the member was discussed in his presence; and the smile of such a man is known to be a fatal thing!

Nor were the friends of Mrs. Armytage much more cheering than her enemies. Dr.

Grant frankly admitted, on being interrogated, that he thought she had done an injudicious thing in breaking through the customs of the country; and as to the Maranhams, whom the ill-omened dinner party brought over to Holywell when her vexation was at its height, Mistress Di, incensed at the invitation conceded to the Spaldings, scolded her outright; while Miss Avarilla, shocked at having seen a dance of so equivocal a nature perpetrated at one of the most primitive mansions in the Riding, assured her that she looked on the Holywell ball as a very unfortunate affair. She confessed she was sorry that Rosamond had witnessed such an exhibition! It was in vain for Sophia to smooth down asperities and soften invectives. Her habitual task of peace-making was as fruitless as it was hazardous.

Nor were these wars and rumours of wars the only source of regret to the family. Lady Rotherham, having seriously suffered in health from her unusual efforts, was confined to her

bed with a rheumatic fever;—Mr. Wemmersley declared in imminent danger;—Mistress Di dropped the "imminent" and said "in danger;"—till Mrs. Armytage, in order to decide whether the substantive might not be subtracted as well as the adjective, determined to drive over to Greta Castle and ascertain the truth.

It happened that, in their progress, they encountered Gumption, for the first time since the ball; encountered him in a narrow part of the road, which afforded an excellent opportunity for a declaration of hostilities, by passing and making no sign! To the great surprise, however, of Sophia, who anticipated some such vulgar show of resentment, the attorney almost drew up as the carriage approached, in order to give force to the air of mock respect with which he lifted his hat from his head, and stood uncovered to receive their recognition. But Sophia was now more annoyed than before. A twinkle of triumphant

satisfaction was discernible in the attorney's deep-set eyes, which augured approaching calamity to the family.

On their arrival at the Castle, too, she had the mortification to learn that rumour had for once spoken truth. Lady Rotherham, though not in *imminent* danger, was confined to her bed by serious illness; and a better tribute to her unpretending excellence could not have been paid than in the gloom prevailing throughout her household. The domestics answered every inquiry with an air of mournful deference. The little children, instead of pursuing their noisy sports upon the lawn, were grouped quietly at the feet of the nurses as they sat moping under the beech trees. The elder ones pursued their studies with the governess with heavy hearts; and Lady Laura was sitting with the invalid. There is something holy—something touching,—in the sympathy of a large family in the sufferings of the mother of the house.

Lady Laura came, however, when apprized of the visit of her friends from Holywell. But she had nothing consolatory to impart. Her mother was infinitely worse; had experienced a violent attack of fever during the night. Within two days, her illness had increased from slight to alarming.

"I am beginning to regret," said she, "that I did not allow Greta to get off his expedition to the Moors. They would have done very well without him; but he had promised Arthur, and I did not wish him to break his word."

"Promised Arthur?—Promised Lord Edward Brereton, you mean," said Sophia, readily accounting for her friend's incoherence at such a moment.

"I mean *Mr. Armytage*," persisted Lady Laura. "You do well to remind me that our playfellow days are over,—which I am too apt to forget."

"But what interest had my son in the af-

fair?" said Mrs. Armytage. "Arthur is staying at Spalding Court, and would not, under any circumstances, have been able to enjoy Lord Greta's society."

"Oh! pardon me,—I thought you were aware——" replied Lady Laura, colouring and embarrassed.

"Aware of what?"

"Aware of Mr. Armytage's expedition to the Highlands," replied Lady Laura, who found it not in her nature to equivocate, when thus directly interrogated.

"Arthur's expedition to the Highlands?—You must be dreaming!" cried Sophia.

"Not at all. Your brother and Lord Leicester Spalding set off together for Glenvarloch yesterday morning—Greta and his friends, the preceding night."

"Most extraordinary, that he should have made a mystery of his intentions," observed Mrs. Armytage, gravely. "I have neither desire, nor authority, to interfere with my son's

movements; and it would have been just as easy to say he was going to the Moors as to Spalding Court. Of the two, the former visit would have appeared the less objectionable."

"And Marian and the baby?—Are *they* gone to Glenvarloch?" inquired Sophia, greatly annoyed.

"It amuses me to hear you so gravely demanding news of them from *me*," answered Lady Laura. "No! they are safe at the Spaldings'—very much admired, very much caressed, very much the fashion. Lord Edward returned here in raptures with the beauty and simplicity of Mrs. Arthur Armytage."

"She is in an admirable school for the improvement of her simplicity!" ejaculated Mrs. Armytage, with bitterness. "The Duchess, a woman without one matronly virtue;—the daughters, destitute of every charm of girlhood;—the Duke, a broken-spirited man, sunk into the degradation of a cypher in his own house;—the sons, mountebanks in manner,

bankrupts in character. What associates!—what models!"

"You paint them sadly *en noir,* my dear Mrs. Armytage," remonstrated Lady Laura. "Few characters look amiable when sketched in outline,—it is the filling-up, the light and shade, which gives them the charm. The Spaldings have very fascinating manners, and I fancy their dispositions are better than their understanding. At all events, they are quite enthusiastic in the cause of Mrs. Arthur Armytage,—which, considering her as a rival beauty near the throne, is at least an amiable trait."

"I can imagine them capable of paying court to her from selfish motives. They have invited that American relative of the Wemmersleys to Spalding Court, for instance, for the avowed purpose of making him their butt; what they intend to make of my daughter-in-law, I am yet to learn."

"How long will Arthur remain on the Moors?" inquired Miss Armytage.

"Not very long, I fancy. He and Lord Leicester return together."

"Lord Leicester, too, for a companion! What an attraction!" cried Mrs. Armytage.

'Leicester!—that mere white curd of ass's milk!'"

"He is less offensive than Lord Wyndham," said Lady Laura. "Lord Wyndham has just the air of a *Chevalier d'Industrie*. One can scarcely understand a man of his birth and education acquiring such an appearance, or exhibiting such vile taste."

"There is no calculating what a person may acquire in such a school as Paris!" said the prejudiced Mrs. Armytage. "But I am keeping you here, my dear Laura, talking of my own affairs; and no doubt you are anxious to get back to Lady Rotherham."

"My mother was asleep when you arrived, or I should not have quitted her. But I shall

not be sorry to return;—for I always fancy that, even in sleep, one misses from the room the person one wishes most to have there. I really fear poor mamma is very ill. You know how apt she is in general to be alarmed; and this time she has not uttered a single complaint. I never felt anxious for her health before."

"You must allow me to send to inquire in the course of the evening. Perhaps you will have a line or two in readiness, to tell me how she is."

"I will," said Lady Laura, taking Mrs. Armytage's hand at parting. "And if she should get worse—materially worse—I shall send over to Holywell; for it would be a great comfort to me to have your advice. Papa would be so completely overset by my mother's danger, that I should have no one's opinion to guide me."

"Certainly, my dear child," said Mrs. Armytage, with more cordiality than was usual to

her. And when she found herself again in the carriage with Sophia, she indulged in her now frequent exclamation of "Why was not she destined to be my daughter-in-law?" Sophia felt that it might lead her beyond the line of filial duty to answer such a "Why" with its true "Because."

The dinner that day passed in more than its usual solemnity of silence. Mrs. Armytage was sincerely afflicted by the danger of Lady Rotherham, whose mild virtues commanded her utmost respect, while Sophia was deeply grieved for her young friend: placing herself in Lady Laura's situation, she appreciated her filial anxiety. It was settled, therefore, that early in the evening, one of the grooms should be dispatched to Greta Castle for further tidings. But in the evening a circumstance occurred, which drove even Lady Rotherham's illness from the mind of Mrs. Armytage.

"I have some notes to write; do not bring tea at present," said she to old Simmons, who

had entered the room without a summons, and stood waiting, as if expecting to receive orders.

"I was not thinking of tea, Madam; it is scarcely eight o'clock," replied the old butler.

"Mamma is busy just now, Simmons," said Sophia, observing that he made no movement to leave the room.

"Are you too busy to listen to me, Madam?" inquired the old servant. "I have something unpleasant to say, and don't know how to begin."

And, to their great consternation, Sophia and her mother noticed that the old man's eyes were wet with tears. The thoughts of both naturally recurred to Greta Castle!

"Oh! that I should have lived to see this day—that I should have lived to see this day!"—was the only ejaculation they could extract from him.

"Has any message arrived from Lord Rotherham's?" demanded Sophia, laying her hand on his arm.

"What signifies Lord Rotherham's, Miss Sophia?" he faltered. "It is of Holywell you ought to be thinking. Oh! Madam — Oh! Miss Sophia. We have never ceased to say in the steward's room—to say and to prophecy—that no good would come of Master Arthur's settling to live in foreign parts, among cheats and spendthrifts."

"Arthur?—Has anything happened to my brother?—Have any bad news arrived from Spalding Court?" cried Sophia, still more and more alarmed, while her mother sat trembling in her chair.

"Not from Spalding Court, Miss."

"From the North, then?—We are aware that my brother is in Scotland."

"Is he?—Heaven's name be praised!—*He*, at least, is out of mischief's way; though Mr. Hardywood assures me they can't arrest a member of his Majesty's parliament."

"*Arrest?*" cried Sophy and Mrs. Armytage at the same moment.

"Yes, Miss—yes, Madam. Sooner or later it would have come to that. Here are two impudent scoundrels of attorney's clerks arrived in a hack chaise from Thoroton; and if that fellow Gumption be'n't at the bottom of it, may I never speak again!"

"Of the chaise?"

"Of this villainous business, my dear young lady."

"But what do these people want with my brother?"

"That's just what I asked them, Miss. Says I, 'Gentlemen,' (God forgive me for giving such a name to such vermin!) 'Gentlemen,' says I, 'What can the like of you have to say to Master Arthur Armytage?' Upon which says they, 'Old fellow,' says they, 'fetch him here, and perhaps you'll like to hear.' And when I informed them, Madam, that he was not in the house—'That 's a lie!' says they, for all the world as if they had been speaking to one of the stable-helpers. I answered again

that Master Arthur was gone on a visit to his Grace the Duke of Spalding. 'Oh! yes,' cries one to the other, 'Dukes and Lords—all alike! One of the Duke's sons has his name to two of the bills.'"

"The *bills?*" — reiterated Mrs. Armytage.

"Yes, Madam; for, Mr. Hardywood having been sent for, and knowing better than I how to enter into their business, it came out, that, many months ago, in France, Master Arthur signed bills of exchange for a matter of six or seven hundred pounds, which have been since what is called renewed, and since what is called dishonoured, and fallen into bad hands; and the fellows seem inclined to give all the trouble in their power."

"That need be very little," replied Mrs. Armytage, with dignity. "A bill bearing my son's signature must always be valid in my eyes. Nothing will be easier than to pay these people, and dismiss them."

Sophia breathed more freely; but old Simmons was not to be so easily pacified.

"Ah! my dear, good, generous lady!" cried he, "Will it be so easy to silence all the evil tongues yonder at Thoroton? These fellows of the hack chaise, it seems, have been passing the day at the Blue Boar—dining at the ordinary, as it was unluckily market day; and by this time, no thanks to anybody if it has not been cried at the town cross, that Master Arthur Armytage of Holywell, member of parliament for the borough, had been getting into scrapes in France, and giving bad bills to get out of them."

"If Arthur were but here!—I am sure he could afford some explanation of all this," cried Sophia, heartily grieved the business had not come first to her knowledge, that she might have immediately paid the demand from her own resources, without reference to her mother.

"His journey to Scotland was after all a matter of prudence," said her mother with a

bitter smile. "He did well to get out of the way of mischief, and leave me to settle his disgraceful embarrassments."

"I am quite sure my brother was unprepared for what has happened; for he well knew that *I* should have been only too happy to assist him," said Sophia, with as much firmness as she could assume.

"I flatter myself he had no right to suppose that his *mother* would have been less liberal," retorted Mrs. Armytage haughtily. "And bad indeed must be the nature of the business which he dared not disclose to either of us."

"Meanwhile these wretched men are waiting."

"True!—Simmons, send Hardywood hither, that I may give him my instructions. Or stay!—let them all attend me in the library."

"Mother! you *must* not undergo an interview with such people!" cried Sophia earnestly.

"Your brother's conduct renders it probable that it will not be the last of a similar nature by which the walls of Holywell will be disgraced," replied Mrs. Armytage. "Simmons, lights in the library."

"My dear mother!"—

"Say not another word on the subject," said Mrs. Armytage; "and remember that I forbid you to make the slightest allusion to it in your letters to your brother. I wish to be the first to speak to him of the affair,—and not till his return."

There was no occasion for Sophia to express her assent. A command from her mother *implied* obedience. Besides, she would have found it difficult to speak at that moment, for the poor girl was weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XIV.

We talked with open hearts, and words
Affectionate and true;
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two.

WORDSWORTH.

SOPHIA had, indeed, some cause to weep. Afflictions were coming heavily upon her; and, but for the excellent sense and right spirit within her, the fortitude of the gentle and delicate girl had given way unresistingly to their influence.

But the recent return of Dr. Grant to the Vicarage had secured her the comfort of an able and friendly counsellor; a counsellor beyond the circle of family affinity,—with no predilections to mislead his judgment, no excess of tenderness to be pained by her avowals of distress.

Doubly harassed by the new mortification arising from Arthur's indiscretion, Miss Armytage directed her walk through the shrubberies towards the village the following day, resolved to seek an interview with her worthy friend.

Dr. Grant, the Vicar of Holywell, was a man who had attained his sixtieth year, without obtaining higher preferment than a living of three hundred per annum upon a parish of two thousand souls;—the great tithes of which formed part of the appanage of the great Mrs. Armytage. Yet even for this advancement, he was indebted to her bounty;—having been but a humble curate on a sixth part of the salary, when, ten years before, she accidentally heard him preach while pausing for the Sabbath-day in the course of a tour through the North of England;—and was struck by the vigorous and uncompromising spirit of his doctrine, the benevolent mildness of his demeanour. The result of her inquiries into his

history and character immediately determined her to bestow upon the obscure divine the first piece of preferment in her gift; which, more fortunately for her than himself, happened to be the Vicarage of Holywell. But although no positive engagements existed between them, it was understood in the neighbourhood that her rich living of Thoroton was to be his when vacant: and, as is often the case when a meritorious postulant is to succeed a superannuated incumbent, the old rector still lived on, to keep the curiosity of such people as Wemmersley in suspense,—and the good pastor still a vicar.

On his vicarage, however, and his remote prospects, Dr. Grant, at the age of fifty, married; married to enjoy three years of perfect happiness; to bless Mrs. Armytage as its origin; and then become a widower, with two helpless little girls to remind him of his brief season of earthly comfort. And here was one of the instances in which the best qualities of Mrs. Armytage manifested themselves without

reserve. To those children she had been almost more a mother than to her own; had watched them through their infant sicknesses; ministered to their childish pleasures; spared them all evidence of her despotic disposition. To the shorn lamb she had endeavoured to temper the wind.

Dr. Grant felt all this as he ought; with a manly, heart-warm gratitude, but not in a slavish spirit. He saw all her faults,—none had ever seen them half so clearly; for he watched over her vocation as over that of the person who had been his second providence on earth. He even told her of them as none had ever told her. Fearless of offence, he stood before her as a minister of the gospel, reproving her pride both spiritual and temporal; and proving to her when none were there to hear, that her piety was a thing of weekly ceremony,—of matins and even song,—of worldly propriety,—of self-respect;—not an humbling in the dust as of a sinful soul before God;—

not the lowly thankfulness of mind, becoming one who had received from his hand an unmerited share of earthly blessings. For all this, Mrs. Armytage respected him the more,—but she liked him the less;—and the Sabbath days on which he preached upon such texts as the compensations of Lazarus in the world to come, —or the difficulty of a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, were days of bitterness to *her*. He heeded not. He felt such words of comfort to be due to his two thousand poor parishioners, without reference to the wealthy patroness by whom his own fortunes were protected. The one crimson-lined pew in Holywell Church, with its rituals phrased in honour of Queen Anne, did not attract the exclusive attention of its minister of the Gospel.

Such was the instructor whom Arthur and Sophia had been so fortunate as to secure, and who was regarded by both with sincere and almost filial affection. Sophia was of all the

family his favourite. By him, her mild purity of heart and soul were duly appreciated. He loved her too for her kindness to his girls; for her willingness to impart to them such accomplishments, as were not inconsistent with their situation in life, although beyond his means of procuring: for, as he would not have diminished by one poor shilling what he considered the portion of the widow and orphan in his own small substance, in order to refine the education of Mary and Clara, it was to Miss Armytage alone they were indebted for their superiority in graces of demeanour to the mere children of the villager.

The vicarage, like every other tenement on the estate of Mrs. Armytage, was substantial and of creditable aspect, though proportioned to the revenues of the benefice;—the wise legislatress of Holywell feeling that she had no right to create a domicile for the present incumbent, which the less liberal views of *her* successors might render a burthen on the

hands of *his*. Nor had Dr. Grant expended time or money on its adornment. With the exception of a few greenhouse plants presented by Sophy to the children, and placed in order on either side the door, there was nothing to distinguish the mansion from the farm-houses of the neighbourhood. And yet, by some unexplained association of ideas, not one of the inhabitants of Holywell Park ever entered the gate, without a feeling of reverence, and a sensation of relief and refreshment; as if the place whereon they stood was holy ground. The good Doctor, all simplicity in his demeanour, would have smiled could he have known how much authority that very simplicity, that very carelessness of the things of this world, gave him in the eyes of the arrogant Mrs. Armytage;—for there, she felt him to be her superior.

"Are you very busy, Dr. Grant?" inquired Sophia, putting aside the unpruned branches of the old jessamine-tree, by which the vicar-

age was overgrown, to peep into the room where she knew he was at that hour to be found, giving instruction to his girls;—"or may I hope you will grant a holiday to the children, and give me your arm homewards?—I am tired with a long walk, and much in want of your support."

"Come in, then,—come in and rest," said the kind Doctor. "You do indeed look pale. Half an hour's quiet in this cool study will be more help to you than an old man's arm. Come in." And he came to lead Miss Armytage up the steps; and the girls, released by her presence from their books and maps, were at her side in a moment.

"Would she have a glass of wine,—a glass of water,—a cup of tea,—of coffee?"

No!—Sophia would have nothing but Dr. Grant's company in her walk; and, immediately suspecting that his young friend might have something urgent to communicate, he not only

complied, but forestalled the petition of his girls to be of the party, by assigning them tasks to be performed during his absence. Passing through the private door made from the vicarage garden into Holywell Park for his use, Sophia and the Pastor were soon sauntering arm in arm under the spreading elm-trees,—each waiting for the other to break silence.

"I have good news from Greta Castle," said he, at last. "One of my parishioners had business there this morning, and brings me word that Lady Rotherham is out of danger. It is unlucky that the express was already off to Scotland for Lord Greta."

"Very unlucky—most unlucky," answered Sophia. "I was in hopes he would have been absent for at least a month to come!"

"No very flattering wish for him to learn, my dear Miss Armytage. Old as I am, you must not fancy me so blind as not to discern

through my spectacles that his lordship is more ambitious of *your* good graces than perhaps of anything but a seat in the Cabinet."

"I do not indeed. I have no doubt you are perfectly aware of the state of things between us; and therefore it is I venture to speak so openly. I have, in fact, been long anxious to confer with you on the subject. Forgive the liberty I take in occupying your valuable time with my love affairs; but you know that for many years you have officiated as my second conscience. The only part of Catholicism to which I incline is the Confessional."

Dr. Grant saw that she was agitated and trying to gain time; and kindly assisted her efforts to recover her composure by a trivial remark on some passing object.

But Sophia had taken her determination, and would not falter. "If you are kind enough to remember all the flattering things you said to me two years ago of Arthur's friend, Mr. Rainsford, and the confirmation

you then gave of my own opinion that nothing but the inequality of our fortunes prevented his declaring an attachment to me and seeking my hand, you will not be surprised to hear that the preference I admitted I had formed for him, has prevented my giving a moment's thought to the attentions of Lord Greta or any other person."

"I remember every word of the conversation. I recollect encouraging you in what I considered a wise and honourable choice, because I knew the attachment to be mutual—(my Confessional is open to others besides yourself;) and believed Edgar Rainsford in the possession of great abilities and good connexions, to be secure of the means of independence—the only thing wanting to entitle him to ask you in marriage of your mother."

"Thank you, my dear Doctor—many, many thanks. You relieve the apprehensions I have latterly began to entertain that I had been too hasty—too vain—too presumptuous—

in interpreting what I regarded as unequivocal proofs of Edgar's affection."

"Make yourself easy on that point. There was nothing wanting but the declaration to yourself—the proposal to Mrs. Armytage. The most delicate, the most prudish young woman could not have blinded herself to the nature of Mr. Rainsford's feelings—*his feelings as they then existed.*"

"Ah! Doctor Grant!—that phrase conveys much to my ear,—more to my heart," faltered Sophia. "I perceive that the reports which have given me so much pain are public enough to have reached your ear."

"They have," replied her companion in a low voice. "I heard, as I was travelling in the north, that Edgar Rainsford had succeeded to a large fortune and was to marry a Miss—Miss—no matter what!—the name was not Armytage, and that was enough to startle and perplex me. I should have made further inquiries; but news came about the same time of

the injudicious doings at Holywell; and I returned home in haste, hoping to prevent one mischief, and relieve my doubts as to the other. Arthur's absence has been an obstacle to my better information."

"Say nothing, I beg you, on the subject to my brother—nothing to my mother. Arthur might feel inclined to resent what, in fact, is neither injury nor offence,—for, as you well know, no engagement fettered the inclinations of either; while my mother might perhaps express her satisfaction in a way painful to my feelings, for I am convinced she now wishes me to marry Lord Greta. But do me the very great favour to ascertain from others the real state of the case. If evil is to be known, I cannot know it too soon. I apply to *you*, my dear Doctor Grant, because I know you will consider the case dispassionately, without giving it too much or too little importance. You will not suspect me of unwarrantable regrets, of any inclination to play the Ophelia," she

added, faintly smiling,—" nor will you impute to me such levity of feeling as to fancy I could throw aside without a pang an attachment formed many, very many years ago—which has increased with the still increasing merits of the object. Commanding as he did the esteem of all whom I consider estimable, what cause had I to mistrust the prudence of my choice?"

" None, my dear young lady, none," said the kind old man. " If we find occasion to alter the opinion we had formed of Edgar Rainsford, let us accuse the frailty of human nature, the influence of worldly associations. As we *once* knew him, never did I see a young man I should have been so proud to call my son."

" Had we been really engaged to each other," continued Miss Armytage, apparently thinking aloud, " perhaps my attachment might have been lessened by security. But it was a thing of hope, of trust, of confidence. It was a tie admitted only by myself, of which I could confer with none,—the consolation of

many a vexatious hour,—the bright prospect irradiating many a gloomy one. I felt secure of happiness, of compensation, of a tranquil and honourable home."

"You will still find them. A spirit such as yours, my dear child, is pre-assured of domestic happiness," said the good Doctor, more affected than he wished her to suspect. "Let us suppose that this man has proved unworthy, there are others more deserving, The steady attachment, for instance, of Lord Greta——"

"No!—" interrupted Sophia. "Do not think so ill of me as to fancy that the affection which has been so long a part of myself, of my prospects, of my hopes for time and eternity, can be changed in a day, like the fashion of a garment!—No! my dear Dr. Grant, I have still a favour to ask of you; that, on his return, you will take an opportunity of relating to Lord Greta all I have been saying to yourself. Were he to make overtures to my mother necessitating a general explanation, he

would give me infinite pain, and cause, perhaps, a coolness between Arthur and his friend. It were better, therefore, he should understand that, whether Mr. Rainsford be lost to me or not, *I* am still unchanged, and still incapable of rewarding otherwise than with my graceless thanks, the preference of another."

"Of that commission, hereafter,"—replied the Doctor. "Let me first satisfy myself that my friend Edgar is a less honourable, a less discerning fellow than I have hitherto believed him. I shall very shortly ascertain the truth. Even before he became a fine gentleman and a man of fortune, I never found difficulty in obtaining intelligence of his proceedings. No man of his age ever rose to higher distinctions in his profession. Wonders were predicted of him. He was respected,—loved,—Well, well!—I will not give up my favourite prematurely——"

"Thank you—thank you"——

"I will write,—I,—Do not be afraid! I know what you would say. Trust to my discretion not to implicate your name in my inquiry. So far, at least, young lady, your confidant is safely chosen."

"We are approaching the house," said Sophia. "Let us walk more slowly; I am not in a state to meet mamma at present."

"I suspect, however, it is no very uncommon case for her daughter to return from the village,—from the bedside of the sick and the hearth of the afflicted, (if the testimony of my parishioners may be trusted,) with swollen eyes, and a tremulous voice?"

"I will not run the hazard of vexing her by the sight *to-day*," said Sophy, evading a reply to his question. "Mamma has just now troubles of her own which I should be sorry to augment!"

"Aha!—This daughter-in-law?—I was afraid so! Without believing all our neigh-

bour Wemmersley's reports on the subject, my observations at the ball lead me to fear that Arthur's wife is a giddy one."

"Not *giddy*;—light-hearted—wanting tact, wanting experience; but with a good, affectionate nature, and full of honesty and candour."

"*That* is much!—You, my dear Miss Armytage, must become her Mentor——"

"She ought not to have needed a Mentor. Thoughtless as Arthur is, my brother required a person of whose merits he stood a little in awe."

"Such as your friend Lady Laura? Mrs. Armytage has much to answer for in preventing that match!—But nothing must interfere with your exertions in favour of Mrs. Arthur. How long does she remain absent from Holywell?"

"*Too* long,—considering that she is among the Spaldings—and their set! Oh! Doctor Grant!—when I see such people as those, how

proud do I feel of my mother! How could I have borne to find myself the daughter of one of those unprincipled, frivolous, disreputable—but I will not revile them, even to render her justice. Admit, however, that there *is* real comfort in having a parent you can respect?"

"And a mind conscious of the benefit. And now good-bye, and God bless you! I see Mrs. Armytage in the conservatory; and if I am delayed by the ceremonies of a morning visit, shall scarcely find time to dispatch my promised letter by the post."

CHAPTER XV.

What a mere dungeon is this house!
By no means large enough; and was it,
Yet this dull room and that dark closet,—
Those hangings with their worn-out graces,
Long beards, long noses, and pale faces,
Are such an antiquated scene,
They overwhelm me with the spleen.

COWPER.

FAR different was the march of events and the tone of conversation at Spalding Court!—*There* no cares prevailed for the future—no uneasiness for the present. No one remembered to turn the hour-glass; and time was only admeasured by the exhaustion succeeding to pleasure—by the glittering chandelier succeeding to the golden daylight—by the pillow of down yielding respite from the brilliancy of both. No moral responsibility appeared to moderate the glee of its thoughtless inmates!

Little did Lord Wyndham Spalding suspect into what a scrape his counsels, carelessly given, and his measures, imperfectly taken, had betrayed his friend Arthur Armytage;—little did he imagine to what unfair imputations his assiduities, mechanically tendered, were beginning to expose his friend Arthur Armytage's pretty wife. So long as he had the "*Céladon Sexagénaire,*" the Squire Leonidas Lomax to mystify, and a prospect of the payment of his debts to secure a pleasant winter at Paris, his Lordship was tolerably indifferent to men, women, and things;—interested in nothing half so much as the success of a *Potage à la Reine,* composed of *blanc de faisan,* and a *purée* of filberts, for which he had just condescended to transcribe an inedited recipe of Carême's, for the benefit of his father's, or rather his *mother's, chef de cuisine.*

"I have a proposition to make you," said he, entering, one morning after breakfast, the music-room, where Marian was playing a ma-

zurka, and Lady Emily Maclaren assiduously rehearsing it. "Will you both ride with me this morning as far as the Grange?"

"*Where* is the Grange?" said Lady Emily, "and *what*, and *why* do you want us to go there?"

"The 'where' I answer by—eight miles off, through a series of secluded woodlands; the 'what' by—one of the most curious architectural reliques of the Middle Ages remaining in England; the 'why' by—to see two sapient wiseacres make especial asses of themselves."

"But I can see *that* without going so far," answered her little Ladyship, still persisting in her *pirouettes*. "As to your Middle Ages, they have left us nothing in the shape of dwelling houses but a series of rickety closets, with high wainscots and low ceilings; and as to your woodlands, I desire nothing more secluded, in the way of ride, than the Brighton Downs or Constitution Hill."

"But in your catalogue of attractions," cried

Marian to Lord Wyndham, "you have omitted those living reliques of the Middle Ages, the Miss Maranhams?"

"I hate the sight of old maids!" cried Lady Emily. "I saw nothing else for the first ten years of my life. Mamma had apartments at Hampton Court."

"If you prefer the sight of young ones," observed Marian, "there is nothing so pretty to be seen as Rosamond Devonport."

"Rosamond Devonport—and who is Rosamond Devonport?" cried Lady Emily.

"That is just the question I overheard Downham asking this morning after breakfast, of the Lomax creature, who had been raving about her as the most beautiful *gurl*—the loveliest work of *natur*—in the county of York; and when I found that the blockhead had actually fired my brother's fancy so far as to drive over with him in his Pelham, and take an observation of this bright particular star, I began to tremble for my heirship pre-

sumptive,—I, who have so long succeeded in persuading Downham that he was *trop Cupidon* to find a Psyche worthy of his curls and complexion; that by marrying (as the French Machiavel said of place-giving), he would make a hundred discontented and one ungrateful,—*I*, to be cheated of my strawberry leaves by a *démocrate décrassé*, who seems bent upon manufacturing rivals for himself! *Parole d'honneur, ça n'aurait pas de nom!*—So, for charity sake, come and bear me company in my preventive service campaign. Let us make our appearance—'not single spies, but in battalions.'"

"Is this Fair Rosamond really, then, so fair?" demanded Lady Emily.

"Never saw her," replied Lord Wyndham, arranging the tiers of his own whisker-curls at a pocket-glass.

"Indeed you have.—She sat opposite to you at supper at the Holywell ball," said Marian.

"That pretty little thing, tricked out with

carnations and old point, like a *bergère en porcelaine de Saxe?*"

"Exactly."

"And you want me to ride eight miles through the dust, to prevent Lord Downham from marrying a Dresden-China shepherdess? I shall do no such thing!" cried Lady Emily.

"Yes, you will," said Winsome Wyn, smiling significantly at Marian; "for these Maranhams are the fiercest Whigs in Yorkshire; and if once they make Downham their own——"

"I suppose we must go," said Lady Emily to Mrs. Arthur Armytage, who desired nothing better than a pleasant ride. "So let us make a virtue of necessity."

And their habits were soon on and the horses soon ordered, and all three soon making their sauntering way across the country; through corn-fields, green lanes, and overshading wood, with the pale honey-suckle hanging fancifully from its boughs,—the startled woodpecker

uttering its shrill note of consternation—or the solitary stoat flitting stealthily across its unfrequented paths. The knight and his gentle ladies twain, escorted by a trusty squire wearing the colours of the house of Spalding, went pricking along the greenwood, as might those of Chaucer, Ariosto, or Cavalcanti; but alas! there was little chivalrous in their *gestes* or *faits*. Their talk, God wot, was of the smallest!—Scandal, fashion, politics,—"Shakspeare and the musical glasses."

"And this then is the Grange?" ejaculated Lady Emily, when at length they reached the moated gate. "Well! I admit it to be worth a visit! A place for Cattermole to paint and people with men in armour and women in farthingales!—How comes it you never brought me here before?"

"Because there is a deadly feud between these people and ours;—a war as of Crusader and Saracen. Nothing but old Lomax's safe-conduct would have obtained admittance for

my brother;—nothing but that of an Armytage yours and mine."

"You should have told me so before we set yonder cracked tocsin jangling. See!—the ancient serving man is hobbling down the steps. Perhaps the monsters will be rude to us?"

"To Lady Emily Maclaren, the high-priestess of the Tories?—No doubt they will," said his lordship coolly; tickling with the end of his whip the nose of a grotesque mask, forming part of the decorations of the Gothic portal under which they were waiting.

"What could tempt you, then, to bring me here!" she exclaimed, getting really annoyed.

"For the satisfaction of seeing your colour rise as it does just now,—which is vastly becoming."

"They do not know you by sight, Lady Emily," observed Marian heedlessly. "Lord Wyndham can announce you as Lady Marscourt."

"Thank you! when the nearest peerage might inform them that Lady Marscourt is eight and forty!"

Lord Wyndham bit his lips, and smiled as little as he could.

"Let me then introduce you as my aunt, Lady O'Moran, whose name is not in the peerage, and who, I am quite certain, was never seen in Yorkshire."

"Do!—There would be some triumph in mystifying the creatures. Pray are Lord Downham and Mr. Lomax here?" inquired Lord Wyndham of the servant, wishing to ascertain whether the scheme could be attempted in safety.

"There's no lord whatsoever residing here," mumbled the deaf old man. "This be the Grange, and belongs to my young missuses,—the Miss Maranhams."

"I know, my good fellow, I know! We are come to visit your young missuses. But

have they no other visiters with them at present?"

"No!—There was the old Injee gentleman that comes courting Miss Diana, and another young chap with him, an hour agone," said the surly porter, mollifying as he caught sight of the coronet and crest on the livery-button of the Spalding Court groom. "But they are away again."

"Too late, you see! Thanks to the age and a half required by the ladies to change their *peignoirs* for their *amazones!*" said his lordship reproachfully to his companions. "Well,—at least we may have a glimpse of the Dresden shepherdess?" And he gave their names to the old man, who, little accustomed to announce strange visiters, simplified them into "a gentleman and two ladies," as he ushered the party into the sitting-room.

"We need not have distressed ourselves to find an alias," said Lady Emily, peevishly to

Lord Wyndham, on the threshold. But he did not answer. His attention was riveted by the picturesque character of the scene within.

Occupying her usual seat, a high-backed ebony chair placed in the deep recess of the Elizabethan window, the pale invalid Margaret Maranham was winding a skein of silk from the hands of Rose Devonport, who knelt at her feet; one single ray of sunshine glancing through the half-closed oaken shutter, and shining upon the long silken curls adorning her sweet and smiling face. Every thing there was ancient and time-worn but Rose;—the old parlour, the carpeting of faded tapestry, the grim pictures in their dusky frames, the heavy, overwrought cornices, the cold, chilly-looking spinstress. But Rose was bright as a cloudless summer day,—all flowers, sunshine, and happiness.

Having risen from her knees to welcome Mrs. Arthur Armytage, with whom she was well acquainted, and to go through the forms

of introduction to the two strangers, she led Marian to the window to be presented to the clay-coloured figure in the chair; and in reply to Miss Margaret's inquiries after her good friend Mrs. Armytage and Sophia, the visiter had only courage to reply, "I am not at Holywell at present. I rode over from Spalding Court with Lord Wyndham Spalding and—*my aunt;*" and Miss Margaret bowed mechanically to Lord Wyndham and the "aunt," while Rose Devonport, having taken care to find seats for them at some distance from the window, observed that Miss Maranham was too great an invalid to enter much into society,—and immediately began conversing with all the ease and grace of a person with whom good sense and good feeling supply the place of knowledge of the world. They talked of the Holywell ball, of the expected gaieties of the races, of the beauties of the neighbourhood, of the curious antiquity of the old manor-house, as if long and intimately ac-

quainted. Winsome Wyn was enchanted!—He thought his *bergère* exquisitely lovely; and began to trust in earnest, what he had hitherto affected to hope in jest, that Lord Downham had not been successful in procuring a glimpse of the cynosure of the Grange.

"As you were never here before," said Rose, when at length subjects of discourse grew scarce, "perhaps you would like to take a view of our enchanted castle? We are very proud of our screen of trees."

Lady Emily protested against the possibility of walking five hundred yards in a riding habit; but on Marian and Lord Wyndham expressing great curiosity, she agreed to rest herself, then return; and immediately assumed a lounging attitude in the stiff gilt leather chair in which she was seated, and which seemed to promise anything but repose; while the three others, after traversing the gloomy old hall, in which two trophies of rusty arms were tastelessly displayed, stepped upon

the terrace, whose velvet turf, the result of many hundred years of care, and symmetrical down-feathering trees, presented a feature almost as peculiar as the mansion. Again Lord Wyndham was enchanted!

Just, however, as Marian was beginning to make inquiries of her young companion concerning the Holywell dinner-party, which she found the Maranhams had really attended, they espied Mistress Di in proper person coming towards them, habited in her usual Amazonian fashion, and looking much like the effigy of the Chevalier D'Eon, as the frontispiece to some popular magazine of the last century. But Mistress Di was out of sorts. Something had transpired in the course of the visit of the "old Injee gentleman" to render her always abrupt manners more than usually ungracious; and, not being at liberty to quarrel with her visiters, she took occasion to vent her spleen by scolding poor Rose for bringing out Marian and Lord Wyndham, without having

first introduced them to the luncheon-room. In vain did they both protest that they needed no refreshment. Mistress Di was, according to her custom, peremptory.

While they regained the house Miss Devonport hastened to invite the lounging lady to join the party; and as Lady Emily followed her into the dining-room, Marian found it indispensable to reply to the scrutinizing glances of Mistress Di by a formal introduction. She almost trembled as she named to the cross but shrewd old woman, "My aunt, Lady O'Moran;" but she trembled still more when her hostess in a stern voice repeated—"Your *what?*—WHO?"

"My aunt, Lady O'Moran."

"Rose, child!—go to my sister; my sister wants you. *Remain* with my sister!" cried Mistress Di, not deigning to return Lady Emily's negligent bow, and almost turning her back upon Marian; nothing could be plainer to all parties than that their absurd subterfuge was discovered! Lord Wyndham, however,

was not to be easily disconcerted; and as they sat down to a table richly and plenteously spread, he engaged the old lady in a conversation which left her no leisure to make herself disagreeable. He admired, in the tone of a connoisseur, the curious service of embossed delft, of at least a century's antiquity,—the finely-wrought silver tankards,—the characteristic carving of the old eating chamber, with its stag's heads, music gallery, and buttery-hatch; praised the highly-spiced brawn, and a Yorkshire pie, which he chose to call *poularde désossée aux fines herbes,* with sundry other dainties, such as may be found on provincial tables, provided with an old-fashioned cook and cookery-book, and whose quotidian fare is daily blessed by his ghostly reverence, a chaplain. But, while he talked to Mistress Di, he attended silently to his fair companions; for not one word of civility did their hostess deign to address to either. Lady Emily in sullen silence sugared her golden

raspberries, while Marian affected to busy herself with a tawny-cheeked apricot; both heartily wishing themselves back at Spalding Court.

"We do not boast, like your mother, the Duchess, six acres of glass in our garden," said the old lady, when Lord Wyndham did justice to the exquisite flavour of her fruit. "But, with a southern wall and stocks grafted from those which my great-grandfather's friend King William sent over to him from the Hague, we can produce an apricot worth eating. The overgrown, washy things your famous Horticultural Societies are poisoning the country with, appear to *my* palate little better than pumpkins; and when I see people like the Wemmersleys (your mother's toadies) with a park like a billiard table, and a house like a bird-cage, growing turnips and pretending to call them pine-apples, I must own it puts me into conceit with our golden pippins,—the only ones, I fancy, remaining in England."

"Pray order the horses," whispered Marian to Lord Wyndham, under cover of this dissertation; greatly alarmed lest they should not quit the house without an explosion of wrath from Mistress Di.

"We appear to have driven Miss Devonport away,—I am greatly afraid we have deprived Miss Devonport of her luncheon?" said he, rising and making a signal from the window to the groom. "Shall we not have an opportunity of offering her our compliments before we go?"

"Miss Devonport is very well where she is," said the old lady, without the least ceremony; looking fiercely at his two companions who were preparing for departure.

"I admit, my dear madam, that I am an unwarrantable trespasser here," resumed his Lordship, pretending to take her displeasure upon himself. "But, under the sanction of Mrs. Arthur Armytage, I trusted you would condescend to accept even the homage of a Spal-

ding. I need not say how much satisfaction it would give my father and mother, if you could be induced to think the distance to Spalding Court a less insuperable obstacle than formerly!"

"Distance is never an obstacle to a visit I *wish* to pay," was the blunt reply. "I choose my own friends and acquaintances, and I hope I know how to behave to them. When people choose *me*, they must take me as it suits my humour to be found." And again she looked fiercely at the retreating figures of Marian and Lady Emily.

"Certainly—certainly. The Duchess will be quite contented with any humour you consider becoming or find convenient," said he, trying the moral experiment of a rough grasp upon the nettle; "provided you accept her own courtesies in return." And once more he pleaded for a renewal of acquaintanceship between the families.

"Your elder brother has been already here

on the same fool's-errand," said Di; "and I told *him*, as I now tell you, that forty years ago your father, the Duke, used to come ambling to the Grange, much as you have done to-day. Ask him why he made an end of *his* visits, and I will tell *you* why I refuse yours. My Lord! good morning. While you have been wasting your time with me, the two individuals whom I trust I have seen here for the last time, have been obliged to accept the services of your groom."

And, Lord Wyndham's audacity being now at fault, he was obliged to obey her pompous gesture of dismissal, and make his parting bow.

"Could one have believed that such a specimen of the barbarous ages still existed in civilized Great Britain!" cried Lady Emily, very audibly, as he leaped upon his horse; looking through her glass at the open window of the eating-room, where she had left Mrs. Di. Then, having recovered her *sang froid* suffici-

ently to get through three or four bars of "Adieu, thou dreary pile!" she touched her horse, and led the way across the old drawbridge.

"What a visit!" said Marian, recovering her breath.

"What a woman!" responded Lady Emily.

"What an angel!" sighed Lord Wyndham.

"*Who,*—Mistress Maranham?" cried both ladies.

"Miss Devonport!"

"That Hecate had completely driven her out of my head!" said Lady Emily. "But now you remind me of her, allow me to put in an early claim for wedding favours from the Marquis and Marchioness of Downham."

"No such thing!—I intend to marry her myself."

"*You?*—You will never marry mortal woman, unless Mrs. Glasse has left a grand-daughter!" retorted her Ladyship. "No!—it will

be just the thing for our friend Downham. His popularity wants refreshing; and a very pretty wife, whom nobody ever saw or heard of,—picked fresh and fragrant, like a strawberry in a wood,—will be just the thing to bring him once more into vogue."

"But that dreadful old woman!" cried Marian, unable to forget the fright she had received.

"Oh! dreadful old women and charming young ones, become alike placable to Dukes apparent!" said Lady Emily. "Every thing is in favour of the match. A difference of religion, of politics, of rank, of fortune; all which must create a thousand difficulties most attractive to an enterprising young man such as Lord Downham. I shall give him my advice and encouragement, the moment I am safe at Spalding Court." And, by no means inclined to forgive Lord Wyndham for having decoyed her into a snare and exposed her to Di's im-

pertinence, she persisted, throughout the remainder of the ride, in tormenting him in the same strain.

"*Entre nous,*" was his final reply, "I fancy we had better keep our own counsel respecting this unlucky visit and its results. No one likes to pass for a *malencontreux,* and you will find the laugh decidedly against us and our expedition to the Grange."

CHAPTER XVI.

Despised, ashamed, his noble views before,
And his proud thoughts degrade him now the more.

CRABBE.

BRIGHT as were the passing hours at Spalding Court, twenty-four of them did not the less complete a day; and joyous as were the days, seven of them were not the less apportioned to a week. Marian soon found herself under the necessity of dispatching her letter of excuses to Holywell; and when Sophia's answer came, hinting a hope that her sister-in-law might be persuaded to pass the remainder of Arthur's absence at home, his wife was prompt in her reply that she was already irrevocably engaged to the Duchess. Miss Armytage only said—"We want you much, and we want the baby." Had she added—"Dear Marian, I am ill and

unhappy, and your presence would be a comfort to me,"—her sister-in-law would have resigned fifty Duchesses, and a thousand parties of pleasure, to comply. But Sophia knew this; and was not in the habit of interfering with the pleasures of any human creature. She had not courage to sadden the light-heartedness of Marian.

Nor was the second week at Spalding Court less attractive or less varied in its pleasures than the first. They had music, dancing, boating, archery, tableaux, charades, theatricals—"everything by turns, and nothing long." New people arrived; and, as the delight of Lomax increased with the appearance of every fresh carriage bearing a coronet on its panels, he soon esteemed himself the happiest of mankind. Even the disagreeable recollection of "that 'ere trifle" he had so blindly and wantonly offered to the Duke, was lost in the favours showered upon him by the Duchess, who had already persuaded him to put down

his name for fifty pounds each to seven of her pet charities; to subscribe to the libraries she patronized; give a commission for a picture to a young artist it was part of her business to *proner* into notice; and purchase, unseen, a pair of Etruscan vases, belonging, she assured him, to a royal emigrant, whose name must not be implicated in the transaction. The management of even so small a part of Mr. Leonidas Lomax's twelve thousand per annum, increased her Grace's happiness (her correspondence) by at least five franks a day!

Nor was this all. Lord Wyndham and his sisters, taking pity on their superannuated baby of a cousin, or regarding the annual summer visit of Miss Penelope as far from indispensable to their happiness, undertook to persuade him that a very pretty Miss Rosamond Devonport was by no means so desirable a connexion as a very pretty *Honourable* Miss Marscourt—the Honourable being, in fact, the lovelier *gurl* of the two. The prospect of an

alliance with the peerage proved an irresistible bait. Penelope, too, was nothing loth. At six-and-twenty, she had begun to despair of exchanging the coral necklace for a diamond one; and when Lady Amabel assured her that Leonidas had determined to give up his "niggers" for her sake, and modify his uneuphoneous name in order to induce her to change her own, Penelope admitted that she had always thought him a remarkably sensible man.

"Mamma intends to patronize him, so you will find no great difficulty in getting him into society," said Lady Amabel, coolly.

"And we must manage to *glisser* the man into parliament after he has been naturalized; and then Lady Emily Maclaren will take some trouble to push him forward, for the sake of his vote," added Lord Wyndham.

"If it were not for that horrible republican prefix of 'Leonidas,' *I* should recommend a Baronetcy," hinted Lord Downham.

"*A quoi bon?* 'Mrs. L. Lomax Marscourt' will look quite *distingué* enough, over a good opera-box," resumed his brother.

And, thanks to these able and judicious counsels, L. L., with his whiskers double-dyed, and his patent elastic caoutchouc perruque more spruce and wiggy than ever, was now seen wandering by the side of the Honourable Penelope, wherever the shrubberies were shadiest, to the infinite amusement of the whole party at Spalding Court. Lady Marscourt, a dowager Viscountess with a small jointure and a suit in Chancery, pretended to look displeased, and to talk about *mésalliances;* but she allowed the happy pair to pursue their peripatetic courtship unmolested, and the course of their true love to run smooth.

Meanwhile, Marian, in all their walkings, drivings, boatings, and dancings, fell naturally to the share of Lord Wyndham Spalding. *She* sought him as the man of the party with whom she was best acquainted, and the inti-

mate friend of her husband: he *her*, because, as a younger brother, he had not the pretensions of an L. L. to engross the attention of unmarried ladies; nor, destitute of a vote in the House, to offer himself as the cavalier of a Lady Emily Maclaren. Such, doubtless, were his motives for attaching himself to the side of pretty little Mrs. Arthur Armytage; for applauding her touch on the piano—her seat on horseback; for caressing her little Harriet, agreeing with her that Yorkshire was a bore, and earnestly persuading her to pass the ensuing winter at Paris. Lord Downham and Lady Emily sometimes smiled at each other after noticing their whispers; but then his Lordship's pearly teeth were still well worth showing, and Lady Emily Maclaren was his faithful *double*. Neither of them was capable of comprehending the perfect innocence of a nature such as Marian's.

Had it not been for the consciousness that immediately on Arthur's arrival they must re-

turn to dull, formal, solemn Holywell, to the severe countenance of Mrs. Armytage, and the certainty of giving hourly displeasure, she would have found the time of Arthur's absence long and tedious. Apprehension of Greta Castle and of her mother-in-law still, however, held paramount influence over her mind. In a month, she was to see her father and accompany her family to Scarborough with her husband and child. But the prospect of the four miserable weeks still dividing her from such perfect happiness, filled her with consternation.

All, however, was forgotten as the moment drew near for Arthur's arrival! —Vainly did the wives of divers sportsmen, guests in the house, assure her that punctuality on such occasions was out of the question; that with a gay party on the Moors and only a home and wife and child awaiting him in Yorkshire, Mr. Armytage would assuredly be a day or two, perhaps a week, after the appointed time. But

Marian was not afraid.—There was no Lady Laura Greta on the Moors: and Lady Laura was the only person interposing between Arthur and her perfect confidence.

Then, Lady Emily Maclaren, intent on tormenting a woman who had so little *usage du monde*, so little tact, as to avow her implicit reliance on her husband's word, assured her that Lord Leicester would infallibly delay the journey by forgetting his ebony boot-jack, and returning fifty miles to fetch it, lest the pattern of that unique piece of household furniture should fall into the hands of Brereton or Dumbarton; as he had once been known to do when on a visit at Penshanger. Still, her mind was at ease.—Arthur would not be staying at Greta Castle to wait the return of his travelling companion; and a few hours, more or less, were of little consequence. And, as it happened, her confidence was more than justified. The travellers made their appearance on the evening preceding the day ap-

pointed for their return. Lord Leicester not having found an inn of sufficient merit to come between the road and his nobility, had chosen to eat, drink, and sleep in the carriage. Again, however, Lord Downham and Lady Emily interchanged a smile; choosing to espy a jealous motive for Arthur's premature return.

Marian, meanwhile, was the only person to whom his coming afforded satisfaction. All at Spalding Court were sorry to lose her. Amid the egotism of the great world, an unselfish person is sure to become a favourite, even with those who want acuteness to discern the source of her attraction. Marian was good-naturedly ready to play for those who wanted to dance, to dance when her assistance was useful;—to talk to the bores, to listen to the prosy; to soften grievances, and subdue murmurs. She had pity for all human misfortunes,—from Lady Marscourt's rheum atism, to the false stitches in Lady Amabel's tapes-

try; and was ready to lend her chaperonage to those expeditions of Lady Honoria and her sister, for which Mamma, or Aunt Marscourt, would have been *de trop;* or to creep out of the way of startling the timid courtship of two such tender doves as Leonidas and Penelope. Even the unobservant Duke of Spalding had taken note of her merits, as simple, artless, and a more respectable companion for his daughters than he was in the habit of seeing established in their society.

"I am enchanted to find you are going to Scarborough in October, my dearest Mrs. Armytage," cried Lady Honoria, at parting. "Mamma has taken a house there for a fortnight's bathing. If the weather will admit, Downham is to bring round his yacht; and we shall have Wyndham and Cecil, and a charming party. You must be always with us,—remember, I bespeak you to be always with us."

"We can settle all that at Doncaster races,"

added Lady Amabel. "Don't forget that you belong to us for Doncaster."

"But the races are not for three weeks," interrupted the Duchess; "and we must manage to meet before that time. Do, my dear child, see if you cannot coax Mrs. Armytage into better humour with us all? Tell her that it will require very black looks on her part to keep us away from Holywell while *you* are there."

"*Sans adieu!*" was Lord Wyndham's farewell whisper; "I shall continue to quarter myself on our convenient friend Wemmersley for a few days, in the course of next week."

"How very, very kind, they all are!" said poor Marian, when at length extricated from their civilities, she found herself once more *tête-à-tête* with Arthur in the carriage.

"They are good natured, friendly people,—we shall find them a great resource," was Arthur's frank reply. "I wish they lived nearer

Holywell. Holywell, between ourselves, *is* monstrously dull. I feel almost ashamed of my repugnance to returning there. But there is something so overpowering in the punctilious regularity of the house; the pragmaticality of those tiresome old servants (who might be so easily pensioned off)—and the — the — by heavens! it gives me the shudders to think of it all! Ah! Marian, I wish we had a snug little home of our own. I wish I had taken your father's advice, and settled at once in a cheerful hunting country. My mother would take it as an offence, were I to propose such a thing now!"

"Indeed she would!" was Marian's reply, giving an involuntary sigh to the notion of a "home of their own," where she might have sometimes hoped to welcome her family,—her kind parents, her cordial aunt; but adding, in a tone of mild resignation, "I fancy we must reconcile ourselves to the idea of living with Mrs. Armytage for the remainder of her life."

"More particularly as Sophia will probably marry. And how unbearable Holywell will be without Sophia!"

And even Marian shrank from the thought of losing the peace-maker, and confronting a perpetual *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Armytage!

"Well, well! it is not come to that yet!" cried Arthur, trying to cheer her spirits; and with his characteristic recklessness, immediately launched into a thousand lively anecdotes of his campaign on the Moors; a recital of his sporting exploits,—of the harmless absurdities of Leicester Spalding—"*faisant supporter aux autres tout le poids de son inutilité:*" of the love-at-sight passion of young Dumbarton for Lady Honoria Spalding, and the self-delusion of the dandy Lord Edward, in trying to bully himself into sportsmanship.

Marian laughed at all her husband's stories, and was thankful to him for saying so little of Lord Greta; without suspecting that with *him* her husband's conversations had been of too

rational and serious a nature, to bear repeating for her amusement. In her turn, she related all they had been doing during his absence,—every little pleasantry,—every little folly—even their ill-timed, ill-ordered visit to the Maranhams. With the folly and meanness of Lomax, he had no patience;—"at *his* age, so base a desertion of principle and national feeling was inexcusable;" but all the rest diverted him,—from the sudden departure of Mr. Chronos on learning the expected arrival of a Yankee conversation-man, a riglar New York Addison, one of the small lionkins of London dinner-tables,—to the *gaucherie* of a country-neighbour who, after sitting through a dinner by the side of the silent Mr. Maclaren, began talking to him with his fingers, on the supposition that he was deaf and dumb. Marian was in high spirits,—animated by the satisfaction of being with him she loved,—animated by the excitement of the gay scenes through which she had been passing. Her

cheek was flushed,—her eye bright,—her voice joyous.

But, lo! as they approached Holywell, a change came o'er the spirit of her dream. Involuntarily her laugh ceased, her voice grew depressed, her countenance gloomy; Arthur, too, became absorbed in reflection. Observant of the alteration in Marian's spirits, he felt himself scarcely just in exposing her to the despotism from which she was entitled to emancipation. They were approaching as victims, almost as culprits, a home by right their own; they were going to frame an humble apology for a week's disposal of their own time, —that time so independent of any human control.

"I am driven to the shabby expedients of renewing bills and raising money by the aid of my friend Wyndham's blackguard agents, for the want of a paltry seven hundred pounds. I—entitled to the clear possession of twelve thousand a-year," ran the current of his medi-

tations; "while, only yesterday, I saw an announcement in the county paper in a list of subscriptions for the building a county hospital, 'Mrs. Armytage of Holywell, *a thousand pounds*—His Majesty, 100*l.*—the Archbishop, 200*l.*;'—but Mrs. Armytage of Holywell, 1000*l.*! Well! after all, there is something princely in my mother's notions! One is proud of belonging to a woman capable of sacrificing the foolish whims and fancies of her sex, to contribute a thousand pounds to so useful a purpose. My mother *has* a noble spirit. Had *I* been master of the Holywell estate, I doubt whether I should have been capable of sacrificing a thousand pounds to the construction of an hospital!"

But this expansion of feeling suddenly contracted when he found himself once more in presence of Mrs. Armytage. Sophia flew to the hall-door to receive them; and, taking her little niece from the arms of its nurse, covered

it with kisses, so that Arthur had no opportunity of observing how pale and haggard were his sister's looks; but nothing could be more frigid, more formal, than his mother's reception of the little family. She asked no questions, made no remonstrances; spoke of nothing that had occurred during their absence, and seemed unaware that they had been more than an hour away.

Both Arthur and Marian began to rejoice that they had been persuaded to set off late from Spalding Court, so that dressing-time was approaching when they arrived at Holywell. Both were eager to get out of that formal drawing-room. Each was anxious to complain to the other of the ungraciousness of Mrs. Armytage.

But when Arthur reached his own room, the mystery was explained. On the dressing-table, inclosed in a blank cover, addressed by the hand of his mother, lay his own unlucky ac-

ceptances; — bills of exchange for 700*l.*, — *dishonoured* bills, bearing the signature of "Arthur Maudsley Armytage!"

It was scarcely a consolation to him to see them lying cancelled before him, when he considered that their redemption must have been the act and deed of Mrs. Armytage!

END OF VOL. II.

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